

Essex Association Annual Dinner

Normally in the August issue of *Rounds and About*, there is a headline article to promote the annual dinner with details of the speakers, menu choices and a final push for ticket sales. However, as we all know, this is not a normal year!

Benton Hall Golf & Country Club (Wickham Hill, Witham, Essex CM8 3LH) is booked for the Association's 66th Annual Dinner on Saturday 10th October. No speakers have been booked but some may think that's a good thing! The event is still in the Association calendar.

The Association's Executive committee consisting of the three Principal Officers and six District Masters have discussed several times over the past few months whether to go ahead with the dinner this year. We agreed to keep the event on the calendar for the time being pending guidance from the Government on the ability for venues to hold such events taking into account any prevailing social distancing advice. We all hope the event can go ahead which would probably be the first opportunity for ringers to get-together after several months of lockdown.

However, by the time you come to read this newsletter, a final decision about this year's dinner may have been made. The Executive committee met virtually at the end of July to discuss whether any further easing of the lockdown in conjunction with advice from Benton Hall will allow us to go ahead. Our decision will be circulated to all our members as soon as possible.

If the dinner does not go ahead this year then I hope we will see you at the dinner next year!

Andrew Brewster
Treasurer and Social Secretary

Contents

Cautious Return to Bell Ringing.....	2
From the Registers.....	3
That's a First!.....	3
Association AGM rescheduled.....	3
Bell ringing continues.....	4
A Virtual Phenomenon.....	5
Simulator Competition.....	8



Cautious Return to Bell Ringing for Sunday Services

The Central Council is working with the Church of England to include bell ringing in their plans to resume worship, and intends to have similar discussions with the other jurisdictions in which there are bells.

A meeting was held between representatives of the Central Council, the Church of England's Recovery Group, and the Church's Adviser for Medical Ethics, Health, and Social Care Policy. A set of Guidance Notes published on the Central Council website has been endorsed by them and will form the basis for the resumption of ringing.

The pace of returning to ringing will disappoint many bell ringers who are missing the activity that is so much part of our lives. The Church is also missing the contribution that bell ringers make and wants ringing to resume. The Church is however very sensitive to the safety of its volunteers and the relaxation of restrictions will not necessarily be as rapid as it is in certain other settings where other factors are under consideration. This is not a return to ringing all our bells as we were used to, or to do anything other than service ringing. It is the start of the road back to normality.

We have had specific confirmation that we are allowed to access towers to get bells ready for ringing: "I have checked with Cathedrals and Church Buildings and they can see no reason why, if safe social distancing measures are observed, that two or three people cannot go up a bell tower to do maintenance and make sure the bells are ready to be rung - in fact I think their preference would be for there to be multiple people for jobs that are unsafe attempted alone."

This guidance will be reviewed at least monthly, or inline with any changes in the Church's own guidance and policies.

The Guidance Notes can be found on the Central Council website at <https://cccbr.org.uk/coronavirus/> and include specific advice for incumbents as well.

Please share this with your ringers and incumbents and ensure that your health and safety is paramount.

Vicki Chapman
Central Council of Church Bell Ringers Public Relations Officer

From the Registers

18th birthday: Honey Conquest; Hazel & Fiona Auker

21st birthday: Michael Auker

50th birthday:

80th birthday: Barry Gibbons, Liz Griffith-Jones, Ray Jones

Deaths: We regret to report the deaths of David French, of Shalford; Mick Edwards, of Great Totham; Peter Mickelsen, of Great Totham; Dennis Terry, of Sandon; and Prof Ron Johnston, formerly of Colchester (St Peter).

Association AGM rescheduled

The Association AGM was postponed because of the Coronavirus pandemic.

It will now take place **via Zoom**

on Saturday 12 September at 11:45am to finish by 1pm.

Further details will be available in late August.

That's a First!

Quarter peals:

1st quarter: Joe Ovenden

1st quarter in hand: Cathy Ovenden

1st as cover: Jacob A Ward

1st Reverse Canterbury Doubles: Gemma Crouchman, Charlotte Parsons, Kieran Kerwin, Scott Kerwin

1st Surprise Major: Vicki Elliott

1st St Martin's Bob Doubles as Conductor: Samuel Beech

There were no Association peals during the period covered

Congratulations to the Ovenden family, who rang a handbell quarter "having progressed from rounds at the start of lockdown."

Information to end of June. Apologies to anyone inadvertently omitted.

Bell ringing continues

Despite the lock down and the closure of St. Peter's Church, bell ringing continues in Great Totham at Scripps Farm. The Old Curfew Bell from St. Mary's and St. Hugh Old Harlow, cast by G Mears in 1884, is now hanging from a tree and is rung with a foot pedal to support the NHS in these difficult times.

A Virtual Phenomenon

As the Coronavirus guidance regarding social distancing and access to churches has meant that ringing in the real world has been stopped until such time as it is safe to return, bellringers across the world have been finding innovative ways of keeping in touch and keeping their ringing skills sharp.

Essex is no exception with some really good pockets of activity, both ringing and social, taking place. Following a recent Zoom meeting with various members of the Management Committee, Essex Ringing Course Tutors and other interested parties, it was clear that there was quite a diverse range of activities and quite a variety of feelings with regard to value of virtual ringing platforms.

I asked each District Master to send me details of what was going on in their district, how towers, groups, and the districts were keeping in touch with their ringers and if there was anything else that the Association could and should be doing to maintain enthusiasm for ringing during lockdown, so that when we do return to ringing for real, we won't have undone all that good work from the Ringing Remembers recruitment campaign.

The following is a summary of the tools and activities that are happening across the Association, and for those of you not already connected, maybe it will give you some ideas to join in with or set up your own. This is not a recommendation for any particular product as there are many different ones available and you would need to research what best works for you.

It seemed that a number of individual towers/groups had set up a WhatsApp group for keeping in touch. This is a free service text and voice messaging app that can be downloaded on smartphones and lets you create groups to communicate with. Others use email to send messages, but of course this doesn't give you real time responses and



is probably a bit more clunky to manage with larger groups of people. Facebook groups were also mentioned as a way of staying in touch with allows either an open or closed group to see and comment on posts but you do need to have a Facebook account to participate.





Zoom seems to be the meeting platform of choice for most groups, although some use Skype, Chime or others. Zoom is a cloud-based video conferencing service you can use to virtually meet with others - either by video or audio-only or both, all while conducting live chats and is free for 40 minutes. You don't need to have a Zoom account, only the person setting up the meeting. You set up a meeting and send the meeting details to your list of invitees who need the ID and password to log into your meeting. I have discovered a useful way of circumventing the 40 minute problem though: when your Zoom meeting expires, you can log back in using the same meeting details without needing to set up a new meeting. Alternatively, you could pay for a licence which would give you unlimited time if you prefer.



Some groups are hosting regular online quizzes or virtual pub sessions, using Zoom or other meeting platform. This has been a great way to keep in touch socially. Themed nights have also proved entertaining.

One district is trying to maintain some semblance of district ringing activity by hosting district practices using Zoom and the Ringing Room virtual ringing platform on the same evening that the district calendar had booked a practice. This has proved quite popular in getting different groups of people together and trying to maintain bellringing skills.



Ringing Room is a virtual bellringing platform site built for change ringers to continue ringing with one another even when socially distanced and is free to use although you do need to set up an account. Once you've created an account, you'll be able to ring in any virtual tower that you have the tower ID for. If you are used to using Abel then this will be easier for you to adjust to. Bells can be assigned to those who are logged into the tower and you use keyboard keys to ring your bell. It is usual to have a meeting platform (Zoom etc) running alongside to enable communication and instruction, although there is a Chat facility and some hot key instructions that can be used. Ringing Room runs better on a PC or laptop rather than a mobile phone or tablet and runs better on Google Chrome or Safari; Firefox (v75 or later) and the latest version of Microsoft Edge. You can

change the number of bells you want in your tower and use it in handbell mode as well.

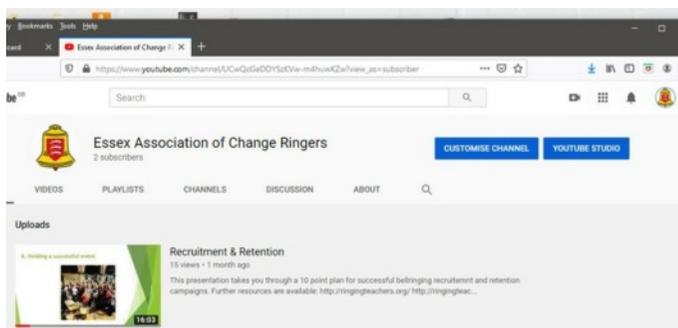


Handbell Stadium is another virtual platform that works with little motion controllers that plug into USB ports. They allow a realistic up/down action for simulated handbell ringing. The 3D version of

Handbell Stadium gives a much more realistic experience than ringing with Abel.

We are also in the process of setting up an EACR You Tube channel as well <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCwQcGeDDYSzKVw-m4huwKZw> . We

could use this to showcase ringing events and activities, and post tutorials, presentations and use for live streaming. We are hoping that some of the



Essex Course tutors will share some of their theory presentations this way in due course.

I hope this has given you an insight into some of the possibilities for keeping in touch with each other during this uncertain time if you haven't tried anything yet. We don't know yet when we will be allowed back into churches to start ringing again, so in the meantime, it is important that we keep the enthusiasm going.

If you have any other ideas, or suggestions, I would be very pleased to hear from you.

Vicki Chapman
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Simulator Competition

The Association has been given a Saxilby Simulator (dumb bell) which is no longer required due to a planned house move.

The Property Trustees have agreed to hold a competition open to Association Towers and individual Ringing Members so that the simulator can be re-used.

The closing date for entries is 31 August 2020. Full details are in the competition document [on the website](#). If you need further information please email competition@eacr.org.uk

The next edition of *Rounds & About* is planned for December 2020. Please send contributions and suggestions for articles to newsletter@eacr.org.uk or by post to Fred Bone, 11 Bullfields, Sawbridgeworth CM21 9DB by **1 November 2020**.