

## Southern District

# NEWSLETTER



## SOUTHERN DISTRICT STRIKING COMPETITION

The 2015 Southern District Striking Competition was held on the 16th of May at Navestock.

The judges were Paul Bloomfield and Dennis Ellisdon from the South West District.

On a beautiful sunny day, and in an attractive setting, five bands entered the competition. After an excellent tea, the judges deliberated.

The results were:

1st: Langdon Hills - 27.5 faults

2nd: Prittlewell - 32.5 faults

3rd: Scratch band - 37.5 faults

4th: North Ockendon - 55.5 faults

5th: South Weald - 75 faults

Langdon Hills were duly presented with the trophy by the judges (Paul Bloomfield in photo above).

Langdon Hills and Prittlewell represented the Southern District in the association finals, held at St. Margaret, Barking on July the 4th (see page 7).

I would like to thank all those who rang in the competition, the judges, and the people that supplied us with a lovely tea.

Nigel Taylor

## CALL CHANGE COMPETITION

This year's call change competition is on Saturday 21st November at Downham. Are you planning on putting in a team? The draw will be at 2.30pm prompt and the competition will be followed by tea and a meeting. Do consider entering a band. Attached are the Striking Competition rules.

---

## CONTACTS

### MASTER

**Nigel Taylor**

(Downham)  
10 Teignmouth Drive,  
Rayleigh, Essex,  
SS6 9PF.  
Tel: 01268783792  
Mob: 07825810847  
s-district-master@  
eacr.org.uk

### DEPUTY MASTER

**Hilary Donoghue**

(Downham)  
16 Norsey Close  
Billericay CM11 1AP  
Tel: 07540 066789  
s-district-deputymaster@  
eacr.org.uk

### SECRETARY

**Alison Nash**

(North Ockendon)  
2 Woodview,  
Langdon Hills,  
Essex SS16 6TZ  
Tel: 01268 490061  
s-district-secretary@  
eacr.org.uk

### TREASURER

**Mark Robbins**

(South Weald)  
6 West Way,  
Brentwood  
Essex CM14 4PB  
01277 234345  
mark@southweald.  
org.uk

### EDUCATION OFFICER

**Steve Nash**

(Fobbing and Langdon  
Hills)  
2 Woodview,  
Langdon Hills,  
Essex SS16 6TZ  
Tel: 01268 490061  
stevenash@yahoo.co.uk

## THE COMPETITION BANDS



Langdon Hills

Catherine Gisby, Cathryn Corns,  
Hilary Donaghue, Alan Gisby,  
Steve Nash, Andy Martin

Prittlewell

Ros Skipper,  
Anne Porter,  
Penny Sloman,  
Steve Halliwell,  
David Sloman,  
John Woollard



Scratch band

Patricia Davidson Ian Davidson  
John Harpole, Nigel Taylor,  
Laurence Turner, Ray Jones



North Ockendon

SamuelBeech, Hilary Spooner,  
Alison Beech, Michael Warren,  
Andrew Beech, Brian Beech

South Weald

Nicole Brookes, Maria Jorysz,  
Vic Dale, Mark Robbins,  
Paul Trueman, Al Sacco



## NEXT DISTRICT MEETING

The September District Meeting is on Saturday 19th September at Fobbing (SS17 9JH) - please note that the details are slightly different than usual.

3-4pm - Ringing  
4-5pm - Tea  
5-6pm - Service  
Meeting after service

We needed to swap around the tea and service as the Vicar and organist will be at at neighbouring church at a wedding.

## SOUTH OCKENDON LEARNERS' PRACTICES

The next Learners' Practices at South Ockendon will be on the 5th September and 3rd October 10am to 12 noon.

***If you have not been before then now is the time to try something new and don't forget we always need helpers.***

## BRENTWOOD AND SHENFIELD

The previous arrangement of alternating practices between venues on Thursday evenings has now ended. Until further notice, Bell practice at Brentwood is now every Thursday between 7.45 and 9.00pm while practice at Shenfield is now every Friday evening between 5.00 and 6.30pm.

The previous arrangement served both towers very well as now each tower attracts good numbers on practice evenings.

Chris Bailey (Brentwood) and Ray Jones (Shenfield)

## SOUTHERN DISTRICT QUARTER PEAL OF STEDMAN CINQUES

Following on from our immediate past master's success in organising Southern District quarter peals of Erin Cinques and Little Bob Maximus at Chelmsford Cathedral, I organised (at the suggestion of Steve Halliwell) a quarter peal attempt of Stedman Cinques, also on the unique Warner twelve at Chelmsford Cathedral.

The quarter peal was scored without difficulty, and I would like to say well done to those that took part whom rarely have the opportunity to ring on twelve bells.

The details of the quarter peal are as follows.

Essex Association  
Chelmsford Cathedral, Essex  
Sunday, 12 July 2015  
1253 Stedman Cinques  
Composed by Daniel Brady  
1. Helen Harpole  
2. Paul A Cammiade  
3. Julia V Montague Jones  
4. Hilary Donoghue  
5. Penny A Sloman  
6. Nigel S D Taylor (C)  
7. Andrew Beech  
8. Stephen G Halliwell  
9. David Sloman  
10. John Harpole  
11. Stephen J Nash  
12. Peter Sloman  
First Stedman Cinques: 7 & 8.

Thank you to all of you that rang, to Chelmsford Cathedral for the use of the bells, and Colin Chapman for meeting us.

It would be nice to attempt a quarter of Cambridge Maximus, but I need to establish exactly how many in the Southern District can ring it! Perhaps we could have a 12-bell practice if enough ringers are interested.

Nigel Taylor

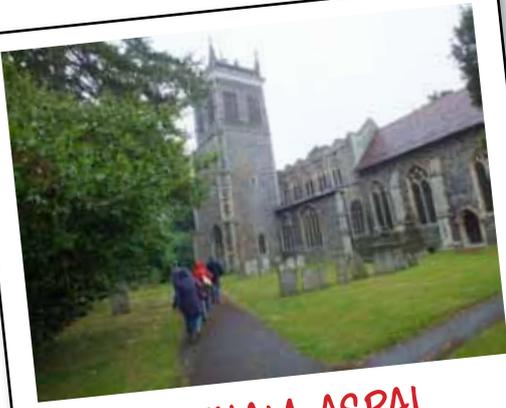
## Q&A - WHAT IS A DATE TOUCH?

This is a question we posed one evening at a Shenfield practice. We wondered if it was something to do with internet dating – perhaps the result for bell ringers. We were told by Ron Brown that it's where the number of changes rung matches the year (or event) being celebrated...now we know! Any other questions and I'll try to find out the answers - or I'll just ask Ron! Beth Johnson

## SOUTHERN DISTRICT OUTING 2015

This year, the Southern District outing was held in Suffolk. The day dawned with a grey sky and the promise - soon to be fulfilled - of rain.

The first tower we visited was Stonham Aspall. I had not rung here before and having heard so many comments (mostly adverse) about the bells, they were a 'must visit'. The former ring of five were replaced by a much heavier ring of ten in the 18th century, donated by Theodore Eccleston. Unfortunately, his philanthropic excess totally overlooked the fact that the tower was far too small to accommodate a heavy ten. The solution: demolish the upper stage and provide an upper stage of timber framework and stud walls. The bells hang on one level, and are rung from a cramped, upstairs ringing chamber, accessed by a long ladder. We coped well with this challenging ring.



STONHAM ASPAL

The pleasant eight at Debenham were next. The ground-floor ringing chamber enabled us to stroll into the church and outside to listen to the bells, in the now steady downpour! We rang some Erin Triples which came round; enough said! Then we travelled to Stradbroke. Another challenging ten. The tenor and 9th hang beneath the front eight and are conspicuously

louder, despite a sound chute for the trebles. Here we managed a touch of Grandsire Caters.

We ate an excellent lunch at The Brundish Crown where the portions threatened to overcome some of our party! We had agreed to send some ringers to the next tower earlier than originally planned in order to ring for a wedding. Wilby are a first class ring of eight, but sadly there is no local band. A course of Yorkshire Major was rung, and finding that I was not required, I was able to listen to this fine ring outside.

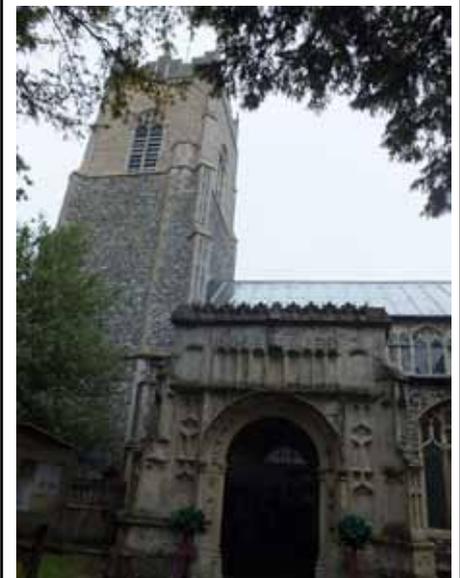


DEBENHAM



STRADBROKE

On to the two sixes of the day; Kettleburgh first; a ring of three augmented to six in 1992. We parked nearby and walked across a guano-infested field to access the church.



WILBY



KETTLEBURGH

continued over

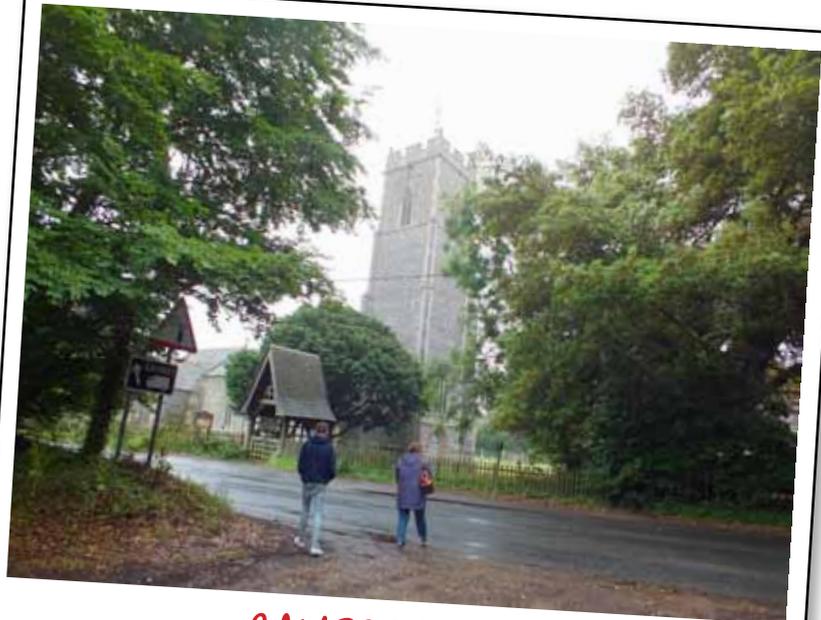
Lastly, we visited Campsea Ashe, a nice ring augmented to six just four years ago. The old tenor, missing a large piece from the soundbow has been retained outside the ring. We rang Cambridge Minor, and at the behest of Mr. Nash, we rang some mixed doubles including Slapton Block Place Doubles, and most enjoyable it was too!

The rain had stopped, but as it was so dull outside, we took the usual group photograph in Campsea Ashe church.

The attendance this year was rather low, and I think that most of us were quite tired at the end of the day from ringing so much! Nevertheless, I think that it was deemed a successful outing and I have already formulated a plan for next year!

I would like to thank all of you that supported the outing.

Nigel Taylor



CAMPSEA ASHE



*Interior group photo due to inclement weather at Campsea Ashe – and right, in the small but neat ringing chamber, and yes there is a glass partition to stop ringers falling off!*

### **St Mary's Prittlewell Ringing Centre** **25th Anniversary**

To mark this event, there is a celebration at St. Mary's Prittlewell on Saturday the 29th August. The plans for this event are:

- 3.00p.m. to 4.00 p.m. Open ringing,
- 4.00 p.m. to 5.00p.m. Service in church
- 5.00p.m. onwards tea in the Guild Hall.

All are welcome at the ringing and service. Names for tea to [peter.sloman@btinternet.com](mailto:peter.sloman@btinternet.com) - 01702 545889

## FIRST PEAL CONGRATULATIONS TO ROS SKIPPER

Hornchurch Saturday, 2 May - 5056 Plain Bob Major

1 Ros C Skipper

2 Lionel S Woods

3 Christopher C M Pain

4 Philip H Denton

5 John A Hall

6 Christopher J Cooper

7 Nicholas M Allen

8 Clive J Stephenson (C)

Rung to celebrate the birth of HRH Princess Charlotte Elizabeth Diana on this day, a daughter to the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge.

## SHENFIELD OUTING

**Shenfield** outing was on Saturday 11th July to north Essex, a day of glorious sunshine. We started at Manuden with a 9cwt six, very much like our own bells, so eased ourselves in gently (right). Next was Arkesden (5cwt 6) then Chrishall (8cwt 6) with lunch at the excellent Red Cow.

Radwinter, a 12cwt eight, (below right) has a strange ringing chamber (but at Shenfield we are used to those) with various boxes through which the ropes run. Above and behind the high altar is a magnificent wooden Reredos of Flemish workmanship dating from the early sixteenth century.

Our final tower was Henham (8cwt 6) - a little difficult to find, but a beautiful setting when you get there. This tower had been added as the local District master said no visit to the area would be complete without ringing these lovely bells - and he was right (we were grateful to Roger Collins who gave us valuable advice about the towers we planned to visit, with the result two were definitively removed from the original list). At the end of an outing, it's great to have easy bells that sound perfect.

Thanks to Bryan Shedel who drove the community bus 'Bertie' for the day, Sue Gilder who organised the towers, Kathy Pattison for catering orders, John Church and Raymond for initial scouting and all our visitors who joined us - an enormous help with the ringing.

Beth Johnson



## RINGING ACHIEVEMENTS

### CONGRATULATIONS TO...

**David Buckley** for his first quarter at Rayleigh on Sunday, 19 July – 1260 Plain Bob Doubles  
1 David Buckley 2 Cathryn Corns (C) 3 Gordon Lucas 4 David Belcham 5 Simon Smith 6 Alan Gisby

**Alan Gisby** for his first spliced doubles at Langdon Hills on Sunday, 21 June – 1260 Spliced Plain Doubles (8m)  
1 Gordon Lucas 2 David Belcham 3 Alan Gisby 4 Cathryn Corns 5 Andrew Martin (C)

**Emma Pinnock** for her first quarter inside at Eastwood on Saturday, 20 June – 1260 Plain Bob Doubles  
1 Peter Knight 2 Emma Pinnock 3 David Belcham 4 Gordon Lucas 5 Cathryn Corns 6 David Sloman (C)

**Sarah Chin-a-Loy** for her first of minor inside at Prittlewell on Thursday, 18 June – 1260 Plain Bob Minor  
1 Alan Gisby 2 Sarah Chin-a-Loy 3 Lydia Roberts 4 Cathryn Corns 5 David Belcham 6 David Sloman (C) **AND** her first quarter of triples at Rayleigh on Friday, 8 May – 1260 Grandsire Triples 1 Sarah Chin-a-Loy 2 Gordon Lucas 3 Cathryn Corns 4 Penny Sloman 5 Hilary Donoghue 6 David Sloman (C) 7 Stephen Halliwell 8 Alan Gisby

**Samuel Beech** (aged 12), for his first quarter at North Ockendon on Sunday, 7 June – 1260 Plain Bob Doubles  
1 Samuel Beech 2 Clare Beech (Mother) 3 Stephen Nash (Uncle) 4 David Sparling (Essex Course Tutor)  
5 Andrew Beech (Father) (C) 6 Brian Beech (Granddad)

**Lydia Roberts** for her first in method as conductor at Rayleigh on Thursday, 4 June – 1320 Cambridge Surprise Minor  
1 Ros Skipper 2 James Laken 3 Cathryn Corns 4 David Belcham 5 Lydia Roberts 6 Nicholas Allen

**Elizabeth Coates** for her first quarter of triples at Prittlewell on Monday, 25 May – 1260 Grandsire Triples  
1 Elizabeth Coates 2 Ros Skipper 3 Peter Sloman 4 Rosemary Wright 5 Phil Briant 6 Phil Harrison 7 Stephen Halliwell (C) 8 John Lambert

**Tracey Taylor** for her first quarter as cover at South Weald on Sunday 24 May – 1260 Doubles 1 Beth Johnson 2 Helen Harpole 3 Mark Robbins 4 Alan Ball 5 John Harpole (C) 6 Tracey Taylor

**Amy Brindle** (aged 12) for her first quarter at Shenfield Sunday, 10 May 1260 Plain Bob Doubles – 1 Amy Brindle 2 Beth Johnson (C) 3 Alan Moody 4 Paul Wiggins 5 Ray Jones 6 John Church

**Sue Gilder** for her first quarter at Shenfield on Saturday, 9 May – 1260 Plain Bob Doubles 1 Susan V Gilder 2 Beth Johnson (C) 3 Paul Wiggins 4 Chris Bailey 5 Ray Jones 6 John Church

**Dion Laycock** for his first quarter inside at South Weald on Monday, 4 May – 1260 Plain Bob Doubles  
1 Maria Jorysz 2 Dion Laycock 3 Mark Robbins 4 Paul Trueman 5 Ian Jorysz (C) 6 Alan Ball



## QUIZ NIGHT AT SOUTH WEALD

**The District Quiz Night is again at South Weald this year - Saturday 26th September  
7 for 7.30pm start - tickets £8  
(inc pizza supper)  
See attached poster!**

## DISTRICT 8-BELL SURPRISE PRACTICE

7.30pm 17th September 2015  
St Peter's South Weald

Cambridge and Yorkshire will be rung at all practices, special method: **Hughenden Surprise Major**. All able and aspiring surprise ringers welcome.

**25th October sees the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Agincourt which bands might like to mark with special ringing.**

If you have changed your **email address** within the last 12 months can you please inform Alison Nash, District Secretary, at alison1nash@yahoo.co.uk, on 01268 490061, or text on 07526 417787 asap. It is imperative that the District Officers email lists are kept up to date so that we can contact you at a moments notice.

## NEWSLETTERS

Please send any reports, pictures, notices etc., to Beth Johnson at bethjohnson6710@gmail.com, 01277 205102 or post to 67 London Road Brentwood CM14 4NN.

Newsletters are distributed at the end of Feb, April, August, October, and December – copy date for each on the 15th of the month.

**Copies are sent to Tower Correspondents, preferably by email. Any member may request a copy via email by contacting Beth.**



**We do now have a facebook group at Southern District - EACR. If you are a facebook user do 'like' the page. If not follow this link : <https://www.facebook.com/groups/eacr.southern/>**

It is proving invaluable for sharing information, especially for appealing for additional ringers for weddings, funerals and so forth. To become a Facebook member go to Facebook.com. Protect your privacy via the padlock icon and 'settings'.

## ESSEX ASSOCIATION STRIKING COMPETITION FINALS

The South West district hosted the 2015 Essex Association Finals, held at St. Margaret's, Barking on July the 4th.

The six bell competition was held on the back six of the 18¾cwt. Octave. Despite the weight, bands did not appear to experience undue difficulty with these easy-going bells.

Eleven teams entered. Langdon Hills and Prittlewell represented the Southern District. The results were:

- 1st: Kirby-le-Soken (again!)
- 2nd: Chelmsford
- 3rd: Writtle
- 4th: Sawbridgeworth
- 5th: Coggeshall
- 6th: West Ham
- 7th: Langdon Hills
- 8th: Prittlewell
- 9th: Mistley
- 10th: Radwinter
- DNF Hornchurch

The 8-bell competition was also held at Barking, and after an excellent tea provided by members of the SW district plus assistance from friends, all six districts entered a team. The test piece (chosen as is tradition by the incumbent master) was a touch of 252 Erin Triples. The results were:

- 1st: North East
- 2nd: South East
- 3rd: South West
- 4th: Southern
- 5th: Northern
- 6th: DNF North West

I would like to congratulate Langdon Hills and Prittlewell for qualifying for the 6- bell competition final and thank them for taking part. I was disappointed with our ringing in the 8-bell competition; we should have rung better than we did. We must try and improve for next year. However, I would like to thank the band for attending two practices and taking part in the competition, and also thank John Harpole for calling the touch that he selected.

Nigel Taylor

## Leigh-on-Sea and Eastwood Practices

Over the last couple of months, because of lack of 'home' ringers, we have resurrected the monthly joint practice, first tried many years ago but which faltered at the time because of people using it as an excuse for a night off!

It is the **FIRST** Thursday each month, with **EVEN** months being at Eastwood and **ODD** months being at Leigh. Visitors welcome at either Eastwood or Leigh on that first Thursday. Peter Knight

## ESSEX YOUNG EAGLES AT THE RINGING WORLD NATIONAL YOUTH CONTEST - INTERVIEW WITH SAM BEECH, NORTH OCKENDON

*When did you start ringing?* I started ringing in May 2014 and it was my Dad who taught me.

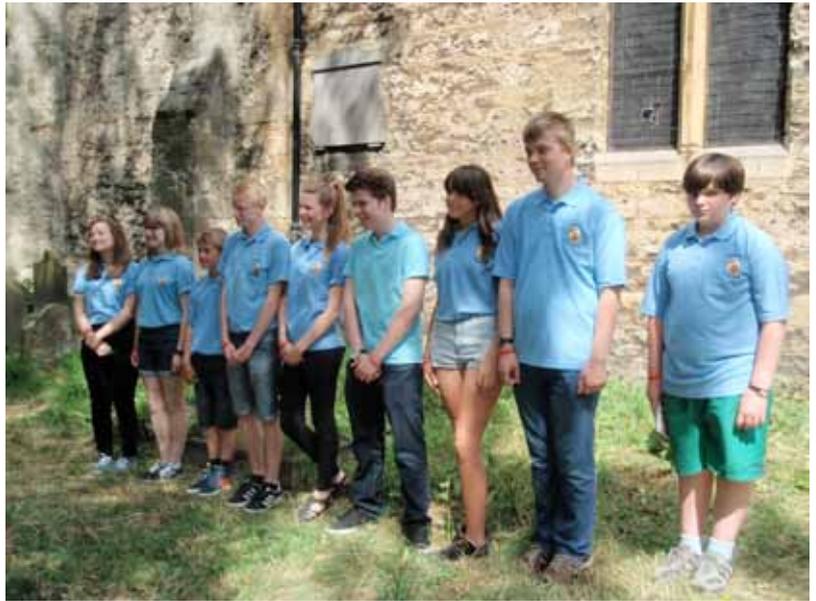
*How did you get involved with the Essex Young Eagles and how long have you been practising with them?*

I got involved with them whilst at the Essex Course, Christina Brewster (the Youth Coordinator) came to help on one of the sessions in our group and afterwards asked me if I would like to be part of it. I have been practising with the other young ringers since April.

*Who organises the youth band?*

The Youth Coordinator is Christina Brewster who rings a Writtle.

*How did you feel when you were selected to ring in the National Youth Contest?* I didn't know what a big thing it was at first because I had never heard of it before! Although after going to the monthly young ringers practices, I knew it was a big deal. After being asked into the band, I felt proud because there were a lot of other young ringers who could have been chosen.



*Team picture. Names in order left to right: Ellanor 1, Mollie (Conductor) 2, Samuel 3, Thomas 4, Francesca 5, Joe 6, Rachel 7, Daniel 8 and Nicholas (Reserve). Essex towers represented were Danbury, North Ockendon, Sandon, Springfield, Willingale and Writtle.*

*How many were in the band and which bell did you ring?* There were eight ringers and one reserve in the band, I rang the third.

*What did you ring and how much choice did you have about what to ring?* The competition was divided into two categories; one was for methods and the other for call changes, both on eight bells. There were 16 teams in the call change category and we were drawn to ring 10th and our time slot was 12:00 until 12:20. The results were given out at the end of the day and we were placed equal 10th.

*Who did the calling for the competition?* Mollie, who rung the second, called the call changes. The rules stated that we had to ring a minimum of 160 changes, including two of the three named changes (Queens, Whittingtons and Titums). The team decided to include Queens and Whittingtons.

*Did you get a chance to meet other ringers at the competition from other counties - were there events organised? And did you ring any other towers in Oxford on the day of the competition?* We didn't really meet other ringers because we went around in our own group although there were people from previous years who knew each other. There was a handbell workshop during the day if you wanted to go to it, but the main thing to do was to grab other towers in Oxford that were open during the day. We managed to ring at: St Mary Magdalen (10 bells), Lincoln College (8 bells), St Giles (8 bells), Christ Church (12 bells), St Aldate's (6 bells) and Magdalen College (10 bells).

*What next? Is the group aiming for any special ringing, and what do you want to ring next (we know you've rung a quarter peal at North Ockendon with your family - well done!)* There are no plans for special ringing, however the group practice every last Sunday of the month (not in school holidays) between 5:00 and 6:30pm and there are plans to have a young ringers outing in September. It would be good to see other young ringers come along, as I am the only one from the Southern District at the moment.

All the youngsters that took part in the contest were presented with a silver bell shaped medal

If any other young ringers are interested in going along to a practice, do contact Sam through his dad Andrew, on [andrewbeech1@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:andrewbeech1@yahoo.co.uk)/phone 01708 440939. More about the National Youth Contest event is in an article by Christina at: <http://eacr.org.uk/etc/news-archives/2015/ringing-world-national-youth-contest.html>  
A new webpage for the Essex Young Eagles is on the EACR website has recently been launched and can be found here: <http://eacr.org.uk/eyr/>

There is also a RWNYC website with more information: <http://rwnyc.ringingworld.co.uk/> and recent articles in the Ringing World.

## North Ockendon Outing - Saturday 18th July 2015

Four 6-bell towers south of Canterbury in Kent were the towers chosen for our outing this year. However, it wasn't until I started handing out the itinerary sheet did it highlight a severe lack of one essential ingredient for a successful outing – Toilets! It wasn't all that bad as the last tower did have 'facilities' in the outside shed!



*Petham*

The day of the outing dawned bright and sunny as we all met up at the first tower of the day, All Saints, **Petham** (6-1-0 cwt) and the first of three ground floor rings. These were quite a 'spingy' set of bells probably made more so by their relatively long draft. The church was built in the 13th century but suffered from a fire in 1922 and had to be reconstructed.

Next was St Bartholomew, **Waltham** (8-2-2 cwt) and the second of our ground floor rings. The tower at Waltham is rectangular in shape

and is situated between the chancel and the nave which, I guess, would make it a little difficult for the ringers to sneak out before the service started on Sunday's! We thought these were a 'challenging' ring even though some work had recently been done on them including some retuning. The fifth was the oldest bell and couldn't be touched so the remaining five bells had been retuned to the fifth making them sound a little solemn.



*Ringing at Waltham*



*Waltham*

However, the good news of the day was that the church had just had their new toilet facilities connected the previous Thursday and so almost everyone made good use of them prior to lunch!

However, on Friday night I had made arrangements to have the 'excellent' facilities at nearby Brabourne church made available to us at lunchtime but now of course nobody needed them! But as the correspondent of Stowting was meeting us there a few of us did make use of them whilst staying at Brabourne to enjoy a picnic in the sun.

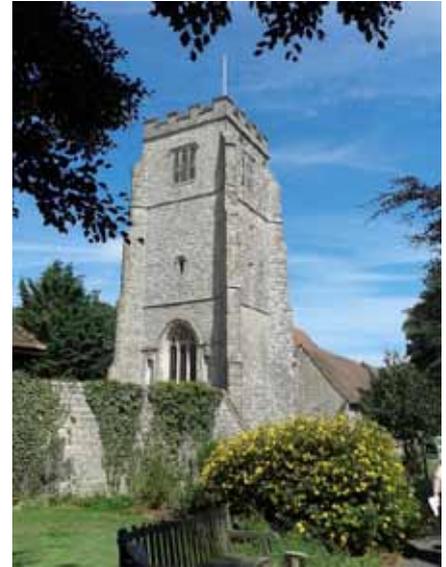
The remainder of the group travelled on to our next tower at Stowting and had their picnic lunches there. Some followed this with a quick refreshing drink at the nearby Tiger Inn.

Ringling resumed after lunch at St Mary the Virgin, **Stowting** (5 cwt), the third ground floor ring and lightest of the day. The village primary school has close links with the church, so much so that you almost walk through the playground to get to the church. The ringing here concluded with an all ladies downwards team.



*Stowting*

The final tower of the day was St Martin, **Aldington** (13-3-11 cwt), the heaviest of the day but most certainly the nicest of the day too. The 16th-century tower has become a landmark for seamen, is built in Perpendicular style and is much grander than the previous three towers of the day. The village is steeped in history and beside the church was one of the Archbishop of Canterbury's palaces, of which only ruins remain today.



*Aldington*



Before everyone dispersed for home the obligatory group photo was taken and we said our goodbyes. Some of us regrouped later in the evening for an enjoyable evening meal at the Black Horse in Pilgrims Hatch which rounded off the day nicely.

**ANDREW BEECH**

## **SOUTH WEALD OUTING MAY 9TH, JULIA REYNOLDS**

It was a bright sunny morning on the morning of the director of music's birthday (9th May) when, from around the environs of Brentwood, small groups of ringers travelled to Kent for the "South Weald – beyond the M25 tour". Merchandising not yet available for the series of gigs which took place, but you should be able to make up your own T shirts from the following report, if you like that kind of thing. Eschewing the traditional form of travel for our band (minibus) for a series of nominated drivers and their vehicles, the ringers arrived at the first tower of St Mary the Virgin, Eastry.

This church has a first floor ring of eight bells and unusually for a South Weald outing not a long draught. The ringing chamber is spacious and fans of Rowland Emmett will enjoy the added attraction of a sanctus bell (from 1375) mounted on a model rig in the centre, constructed from a pair of ancient pram wheels (pram probably not quite as old as the bell). The church itself

contains a most unique feature, situated above the Chancel Arch, enclosed within a rectangular frame, are rows of seven "medallion" wall paintings; the lower group was discovered in 1857 and the rest in 1903. They remained in a rather dilapidated state until the Canterbury Cathedral Wall Paintings Department brought them back to life. The medallions are evidently of the 13th Century, having been painted while the mortar was still wet. Each medallion contains one of four motifs: trefoil flower, lion, doves and a griffin. Each one is a symbol of different aspects of Christian life. Another item of note is a copy of the "vinegar" bible, so called because of the misspelling of the page heading for Luke 20:9 where "the parable of the vineyard" became "the parable of the vinegar".

Apart from the sanctus, the oldest bell (7) dates from 1734 while the lighter bells were founded in 2007 at Whitechapel. Rounds and call changes were rung, plus



methods. We then rung down in peal ending in queens just in time for the resident band to have to ring up again to commemorate the VE day anniversary (oops!).

If you like, or ring at, St Augustine's Northbourne, look away now. These bells were generally regarded by our fine tuned South Weald sensitivities as making a most unfortunate sound, even experienced ringers being forced to leave the chamber with fingers wedged in ears. (But hey, I'm an inexperienced ringer, I know nothing.) They are reached by a cast iron spiral stair which wobbled dramatically as more people mounted it. The ringing chamber reminds one of ringing in a loft space with no natural light and very low ceiling. We rang bob doubles and Cambridge with Beverley spliced but I was glad to leave the cacophony behind me, climb down the spiral stair and admire the church building. This still retains its original cross or cruciform plan and has hardly been altered since it was built, in the Norman style, nearly nine hundred years ago. The bells were originally cast by Matthew Bagley in 1711 and three of Bagley's bells survive, Alfred Bowell recast the other two in 1909. An additional new treble was cast in 1911, which brings the number of bells at Northbourne to six.

On to Deal in Kent for the last ring before lunch. St Leonards has a pleasant ring of six, although the tenor bell rope snags on a beam very slightly which makes for added handling entertainment. At St Leonards we also learned that "things aren't always as long as John says they are" but probably the less said about that the better. Parts of the current Church of St Leonard's certainly date to approximately 1100 although over the centuries since, it has seen many alterations. This leaves the building now standing, as a confusion of architectural styles. The Nave and chancel contain the earliest remaining architecture, with the

original tower being added some 80 to 100 years later. The current tower is of 17th century construction (completed in 1686) having been built to replace the 12th century one which had collapsed due to the church falling in to ill repair prior to the reformation. Many other repairs and alterations have obviously occurred over the centuries While this amalgam of architectural styles has led to what some would call an aesthetically unattractive building, (or what others would call errr... a little odd looking) it results in the bulk of the congregation facing south, rather than the traditional east and therefore sitting side-on to the Altar; the addition of a gallery that only runs half way round the church gives the feeling that the Altar is at the end of a corridor.

Having now offended Northbourne and Deal, I shall move onto the main part of the day for any ringing outing: lunch. There had been considerable debate and much to-ing and fro-ing of email regarding this important aspect of the trip; some ringers braved the beach and bought sandwiches for a picnic while others adjourned to the King's Head on the seafront. I will say little about this, except to remark that by the end of the lunch break, the ringers on the beach were in the pub thawing out over pots of hot tea, while the ones in the pub had not been lured away to the beach for a spot of sunbathing.

After lunch the 8 bells at St Mary, Walmer were ready and waiting: they are a lovely set but unfortunately we were a large group of 20 or so ringers and the chamber is quite bijoux so a shift pattern was appointed up and down the stairs. After bob doubles and call changes the less-experienced hands descended to admire the church (while the more experienced were kept quiet through their methods with liberal helpings of the

traditional dental-deadly cinder toffee). St Mary's is a fine example of Victorian Gothic revivalism in the so-called "Decorated" style. The main fabric of the building, built of Kentish Rag with Bath stone, is unchanged since it was built in 1887 although the Granville tower was not added to the church until 1893. The ring of 8 were cast in 1892 by John Warner with the uninscribed bell from Blessed St Mary (not to be confused with the newer St Mary's) was recast to form the 6th. In 1934 the bells were retuned and rehung by Mears & Stainbank.

On to St Nicholas at Ash-Next-Sandwich. Those hoping this meant further refreshment were disappointed, although a delightful fruitcake was supplied in honour of the aforementioned birthday. Again, after the usual Plain Bobs, the band rang Cambridge Royal and although this did mean poor Tembe had to go without his "Mum" for a while, Elizabeth was able to practice her dog sitting skills. St Nicholas' has a ring of 10, and the chamber is reached by staircase with its own outside access. However, the inside of the church is well worth a visit, not least because of the fine collection of medieval monumental effigies. The highly visible tower was once used as a navigation aid and the current bells date back to 1790, although prior to this ring, cast by Thomas Mears, there was a ring of 5 dating back to the 1500s.

The last tower of the day was reached at around 4.30pm: St Mary the Virgin at Wingham has a ring of 8 with a ringing gallery which means one can sit quietly in the nave looking up and appreciating the efforts of

others! The bells are the oldest complete ring of 8 in Kent dating back to 1720 and cast by Richard Phelps. They are a fine set, having never been retuned. The church's size and prominence stem from its status as a College of Canons, founded in 1286. However, by Elizabethan times the building was in poor repair; in consequence, the old north aisle was pulled down and the south aisle rebuilt.

We gathered in the churchyard for a tour photo, particularly poignant for the South Weald band as it was the last tour to be led by Maria before she and Ian travel north. We will miss them both but wish them every happiness in their new home, as Ian takes up his role as chaplain to the bishop of Manchester.

Bells rung, cake eaten, historical architecture admired, tans topped up on the beach at Deal, we duly returned to South Weald for a well earned curry.

Credit roll:

Organiser: Maria

Tower consultant: David (Maria's brother)

Drivers: Paul, Ian, Mark.

Social secretary: Julia.

Toffee tester: John Harpole

Best in show: Tembe the Rhodesian Ridgeback.

Special mention to Pam for allowing us to descend on her back home in Essex with a boot full (literally) of curry and thanks to Maria and Ian for keeping us all on our best behaviour, sadly I fear for our sense of decorum now you are both in Manchester.

## 40TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY QUARTER

On 29 March 1975, Patricia Harpole and Ian Davidson were married at St Mary's, Shenfield. Since their marriage they have lived in Salisbury where Ian has lived all his life and where Pat went to college. They are both bellringers, Pat having been taught by Harry Turner, long time verger at St Mary's. To celebrate their ruby wedding anniversary, Pat and Ian decided to visit Essex for a long weekend and include a visit to St Mary's to attempt a quarter peal and visit her parents' grave. Also ringing were Pat's younger brother and sister-in-law, and Laurie Turner (Harry's son) who lives in Dorset. Maria from South Weald very kindly joined us to complete the band.

John Harpole

The picture right - ringing handbells at the wedding reception - shows how everyone has changed over 40 years! John is far left, Pat far right next to Harry Turner who ran St Mary's band and taught many ringers, including the Harpoles, Laurie (his son) and Raymond, his nephew.



St Mary the Virgin, Shenfield

Sunday, 17 May 2015

1296 Cambridge Surprise Minor

1 Ian Davidson

2 Patricia Davidson

3 Helen Harpole

4 Maria Jorysz

5 Laurence H Turner

6 John Harpole (C)