

The Belfry

September 2005

Issue 82

The Quarterly Journal of the Maidstone District

Editorial

It has been a long while since the last issue of *The Belfry* hit the ringing rooms — seven months to be precise. There are no doubt those who have been suffering withdrawal symptoms without their quarterly fix of news from around the District. The upside, of course, is that there is plenty to fill the pages of this issue.

One of the reasons for the lateness of this issue is that your Editor, like everyone else, is finding that other commitments are leaving less and less time to put into District matters. It is this lack of time, amongst other things, that has prompted a number of the present Committee members to decide not to stand for re-election for the coming year. We will therefore need to bring some new blood into the team that will be running the District for the next twelve months.

This is no bad thing. Your Committee has worked very hard over the last few years. But there comes a time when new ideas are needed if the District is to continue to fully meet the KCACR's objectives of the cultivation of the art of change ringing and the establishment, maintenance and encouragement of service ringing.

I therefore urge each and every member of the District to at least think about standing for election to the Committee, especially if they have new ideas on taking the District forward. If you feel that you really don't want to be on the Committee, then at least please come along to the Annual District Meeting and have your say on who represents you on the new Committee. We need a democratically elected Committee with a mandate from the members of the District, not just people who are doing it because no-one else will.

There are encouraging signs within the District, not least the restoration projects at Aylesford and Nettlestead where there is renewed enthusiasm not only amongst the local ringers but amongst the church and the wider community. We must build on this, and if you feel you have something to give ringing in this District please be at the ADM at Leeds on Saturday 8th October ready to put yourself forward. The future of the District depends on you.

Roy Barclay

In this Issue

John Betts - 50 years a tower captain: Page 5

KCACR 125th Anniversary Celebrations: Page 9

Three Counties Tour: Page 11

Bell Restoration Progress: Page 12

Plus all the usual features

Belfry Gossip

Two new members were elected at the Annual Three new members were elected at the Quarterly District Meeting at Hunton on 9th July. We welcome **Sonia Walsh** and **Margaret Fitzgerald** of Boughton Monchelsea, **Maggie Marks**, Staplehurst and **Paul Bastow**, Aylesford. We look forward to seeing them at District events.

* * * * *

Congratulations to our District Secretary **Dot Hooker** who rang her 500th Quarter-peal on Sunday 15th May. The quarter, of Grandsire Triples, was for Evensong at Dot's home tower of All Saints' Maidstone, and also to celebrate the 125th Anniversary of the KCACR.

* * * * *

Congratulations also to **Liz Foyle** who rang her first quarter for 38 years when she rang at Stansted on 15th May to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the vicar's incumbency. This quarter, too, was part of the 125th anniversary celebrations.

* * * * *

We are sorry to have to report that **David Pye** of West Malling has been unwell and has had to give up his post as one of the District's Ringing Masters. The other Ringing Master, Sue Bassett, has kindly agreed to carry on single handed for the moment.

* * * * *

Things are progressing well with the restoration and augmentation of **Nettlestead** bells. The bells were lowered in the first week of August and are to be rededicated on 10th October. There is more about this project on page 11 of this issue of *The Belfry*.

* * * * *

Still at Nettlestead, on Saturday 30th March **Jean Walton**, a ringer at St. Mary the Virgin Nettlestead, died. The Funeral service was held at Holy Trinity Church East Peckham on Monday 9th May. The service was conducted by Rev. Bill Dunphy and was attended by a large congregation including most of the Nettlestead ringers. As Holy Trinity has no bells a recording of the Nettlestead bells, which was made some time ago, is played over the outside loudspeakers at Holy Trinity each Sunday, and it was therefore fitting that the recording was played as Jean's coffin left the church, especially as at the recording Jean is ringing the number three. Jean was a lovely person and a great asset to the tower; she will be greatly missed by all.

Boughton Monchelsea tower contact **Bill Cox** and his wife Angela have moved to "Faraway", Heath Road, Boughton Monchelsea, Maidstone, KENT, ME17 4HZ . Their phone remains the same at 01622 741637 and their e-mail address billangie@wjcox.fsnet.co.uk

* * * * *

It is with great sadness that we have to report that **Pat Dickens** of Barming passed away on the morning of Tuesday 12th July in Maidstone Hospital. She had been a member of the KCACR since 1952. Pat had been taken ill at the end of the previous week while on holiday and had gone into Maidstone Hospital for tests to find out what was wrong with her. It is believed that Pat died from a brain haemorrhage. She will be greatly missed by all. Pat's funeral was held on Thursday 28th July at St Andrew's Barming Heath. We hope to include an appreciation of Pat's life in our next issue

* * * * *

The bells of **All Saints Maidstone** featured on the early morning show on Radio Kent on Sunday 23rd July. The programme also had a virtual tour of the tower and bells expertly narrated by Tower Captain Graham Heath.

* * * * *

Aylesford held a Tower Open Day on Sunday July 3rd as part of the run up to the re-hanging this coming winter. It turned out to be a great success with around 100 visitors attending, many local but some from afar . A number of potential new recruits came forward, and there was some good publicity for the parish and for ringing in Kent. £130 was raised by donation towards the restoration fund.

* * * * *

Finally we hear that **Trewin Laws** of Bearsted has just completed 30 years as a ringer, and celebrated with a quarter peal. Congratulations, Trewin, and we hope to see you ringing for many years to come.

Have you any gossip from your belfry?

Let the Editor know on
(01580) 890247
or E-Mail

thebelfry@kcacr-maidstone-district.org.uk



The Cinque Ports Ringing Centre at Dover

In order to retain the status of being “recognised by the Central Council” a Ringing Centre is required to submit an annual report of its activities. 2004 was quite an active year for Dover and we hadn't realised just how active it was until the time came to compile the report. On the report form is a tick-box to apply for the Worshipful Company of Founders' annual prize, awarded to the Centre that is deemed to have made the greatest contribution to ringing.

To our amazement our speculative little tick in the box has brought fame, recognition, and most importantly - money! Representatives from the Worshipful Company will be coming to see the Centre later this year for a formal presentation of the cheque. In the mean time we shall be planning some form of ceremony, and deciding how best to use the £500 to further good practice in teaching ringing.

What did we do to impress the judges so much? Here are some extracts from our report that may give some idea of our activities.

Achievements during 2004 including type and frequency of courses:

Weekly “clinics” in basic skills started in January 2004 and continued throughout the year. Only five Saturday mornings were missed for church festivals and other events. The band at St Peter-in-Thanel has now moved on to standard methods after coming regularly to the early clinics.

We ran three pre-booked courses, in Kaleidoscope Ringing, Stedman, and Surprise respectively. The latter was held at Lyminge, the first use of a tower away from our base at Dover. A trial run of a “teaching the teachers” project has helped to establish a new band at Walmer.

Comparatively new ideas such as Kaleidoscope and other novel teaching strategies, using Bastow and Cloisters for example, are filtering through to other towers.

In collaboration with the Kent County Association, the Centre ran a public relations exercise during the weekend of the annual Dover Regatta. Of the estimated twenty thousand people at the Regatta, over five hundred visited the mobile belfry.

How did we measure our success?

45 students representing 16 towers from four of the six districts in the County have attended Saturday morning sessions. The 20 tutors and helpers came from 9 different towers, although it is difficult to draw a distinction as students from earlier sessions may return as helpers.

Favourable feedback from client towers gives an informal assessment of the extent to which fresh ideas are being adopted. The Centre continues to monitor the situation at Walmer and provides assistance there when required.

The Saturday morning beginners' “clinics” have run for 18 months now and are now wearing rather thin; some new initiatives are needed urgently to regain their earlier popularity. Someone did whisper “Stedman” and “Cloisters”, but don't be put off by that. We don't want to frighten away beginners, who are our prime clients, so we'll explore those possibilities very gently. Please make more use of the practice opportunities at Dover each Saturday morning. Come to learn or to help, but do come - use it, or lose it!

Peter Dale

Committee Matters

The District Committee has met twice since the last issue of *The Belfry* went to press, on Sunday 20th February and Sunday 15th May. Here is a resumé of the main points discussed:

Maidstone District Committee Meeting of 20th February 2005

Arising from the previous meeting

E-mail circulation list: This was to also to be used for circulation of the e-version of *The Belfry*.

KCACR Handbook: The requisite information had been passed to the Handbook editor, who had experienced considerable difficulties in getting all the necessary information in.

Treasurer's Report

Only a few KCACR subscriptions were still outstanding. Five payments had so far been made to the "spliced fund". The Treasurer reported that John Caley had resigned from the Association and it was agreed that a letter be sent on behalf of the Committee thanking John for all his past support and encouragement to the District.

Call Change Competition rules

These were discussed and a draft would be brought to the April Quarterly for consideration, with a final draft agreed for ratification at the ADM in October

KCACR 125th celebrations

Richard Barclay agreed to take responsibility for the sale of 125 memorabilia.

Tom Cullingworth Bequest

Tom's books, memorabilia, peal books and handbells had been left for the use of the District, under the custody and safekeeping of All Saints Maidstone. John Keeler had asked for some assurance on behalf of the Cullingworth family for safeguards etc including insurance cover against damage or loss. The meeting's gratitude was expressed on behalf of the District and agreed that All Saints should proceed with making the necessary security arrangements.

Change of District Meeting days had been noted that 4 of 6 of the Districts meet on the 2nd Saturday in each month thus limiting any 'cross-district' attendance. It was agreed that a more flexible diary would be utilised for 2006 but with using the 2nd Saturday as a guideline. The possibility of a joint District meeting in 2006 was also suggested.

Ringing Masters report

Teaching the Teacher: Various points were made about the use and involvement of County resources. It was agreed that the Ringing Master should pursue this further on behalf of the District.

Any Other Business

The Belfry: The Editor apologised for delay in publication. Distribution would be made shortly by e-mail with hard copy following about a week later.

Bells on Sunday: Clarification was made on the arrangements at each venue i.e. Open ringing at Hunton and Linton for services and ringing at Leeds at discretion of Tower Captain Chris Saunders. The poster would be updated in the hope it would encourage increased support for the project.

County 6 Bell Competition: Arrangements with the tower are in place but there would be a need of support from the District for catering.

Maidstone District Committee Meeting of 15th May 2005

Arising from the previous meeting

Handbooks: These had been distributed. Some errors had been reported.

KCACR 125th celebrations: Fourteen members from the district attended the service and photo call and 6 attended the celebration lunch. Approximately 200 people attended the service.

'Training the trainers': A very positive response had been made and the Ringing Master agreed to set up the required session(s).

Striking competition: Details had been circulated via email/post'. The Chairman would be attending a Barming practice to liaise further on behalf of the Committee.

Treasurers Report

A very small number of subscriptions were still outstanding. £335 had been donated to the Spliced Fund to date.

District Reps Report from County Meetings on 26th February and 10th May.

- ?? The main points arising from the Meetings included:
- ?? Public liability insurance problems were still being investigated.
- ?? Database membership was up to date at present but more links and updates are proposed for the future
- ?? Essex trophy participation – no enthusiasm from the county

- ?? Peter Dale had been appointed County Publicity Officer.
- ?? County Committee has a CRB Child Protection Report for referral to if required.

Ringling Master's Report

The Ringing Master felt that the meeting at St Michael's in April had been successful with satisfactory participation in the ringing perhaps because people were fresher, it being a morning meeting. It was agreed to offer perhaps two meetings a year as morning events. Arrangements were already in hand for the Hunton Quarterly in July . Special Methods would be Reverse Canterbury Doubles and Kent and Oxford Minor. Interest in the Training the trainers would be further assessed at this meeting.

AOB

200th celebrations of the Battle of Trafalgar: Ringing for this in October was discussed. It was agreed that the District be invited to celebrate/participate in this anniversary with a Quarter Peal weekend. *Mid-week ringing:*

Recently there had been an increasing number of requests for bells to be rung at weddings and funerals in mid-week. The Ringing Master offered to collate a list of ringers who might be available.

8-bell ringing: A feeling had been discerned within the District that more 8bell ringing at a basic level was wanted. It was agreed that a direct request to the Ringing Master and/or Committee should be made by those requiring such training events, and that people should be encouraged to organise their own quarter peals in the furtherance of individual progress.

Annual District Meeting: This would take place at Leeds on 8th October 2005. Special methods would be Grandsire (Doubles through to Caters) and Cambridge (Minor through to Royal).

This does not purport to be a complete and accurate report of the meetings. For a copy of the full minutes please contact the District Secretary.

John Betts: 50 years a Tower Captain

John Betts has completed 50 years as Tower Captain at Harrietsham and was recently presented with an engraved plate to celebrate his achievement. The picture on the right shows the presentation which took place at Sunday service. I think we all agree with the sentiments expressed in the following speech which Ferrers Hindle made at the presentation.

"Today I have, on behalf of the Harrietsham Ringers, the great pleasure to present to Mr Betts this plate to mark 50 years he has served as Tower Captain.

Many ringers have, over the years, been trained in the art of change ringing by Mr Betts and as a teacher passes his expertise on to his students they realise that ringing is a team. effort and therefore the giving of time to the art can give back much pleasure. Indeed I have myself as well as other ringers received many hours of pleasure and hope that by ringing for Sunday service, weddings, special events, etc., we have contributed to that giving back. But none of this would have been possible if Mr Betts had not been there as Tower Captain to teach us.

Today, therefore, is one day that the students are giving to their teacher a well earned memento to celebrate 50 years' service to bell ringing as Tower Captain of St John the Baptist, Harrietsham".

Congratulations and thanks John, on behalf of the Maidstone District for all you have done—and continue to do—for the ringing exercise



Ringling Master's Report

Firstly I must begin with an apology, in that I have not been as active a Ringing Master as I would have liked, or perhaps as this District deserves. However, as no-one else wanted the job you're stuck with me, at least until October's ADM. Hopefully someone with more voluntary time on their hands will come forward – remember we have two Ringing Master posts to fill. Is there anyone out there? If you want to know more telephone me on 01580 891917 or e-mail chrisnsuebassett@tiscali.co.uk

200th Anniversary of Trafalgar Day - Friday 21st October 2005.

As mentioned on page 14 a District Quarter Peal weekend has been suggested to commemorate this historic event. Please let me know if you are likely to be ringing and whether you need any assistance (ringers, conductors or practice). After the event, please report back to the Belfry Editor and Ringing Masters (whoever they may be by then!) with details of your achievements.

Weddings

This summer has highlighted once again the difficulties many of us have in ensuring enough ringers are available to ring at weddings, particularly for an increasing number of weekday weddings. The Maidstone District e-group is wonderful for reaching many ringers with requests for help, but I am mindful that many have yet to embrace this new fangled method of communication. It would, therefore, be very useful if each tower could complete and return a list of their ringers with individual contact details, who could be available to ring for weddings either on Saturdays, Weekdays or both. (This does not of course commit anyone to anything, but would be helpful when trying to cover weddings, particularly when the "season" begins again next spring.) On the facing page is a form for your use and return to me please.

Training events

Does your tower have any training needs? Many ringers already support other towers with informal training and assistance and long may this continue. However, if you have a specific training need that would benefit from more formal or regular training events, please let me know by completing the other side of the wedding form and returning it to me. Staplehurst has the technology to enable silent practices to the outside world, with good quality simulated sound within the tower on tied bells, so practices can (within reason) take place at any time you wish, without worrying that you will be annoying the neighbours.

Happy Ringing!

Sue Bassett
District Ringing Master
Tel: 01580 891917

Candlelit Soiree & Entertainment

at the Brassey Centre, Station Road, Aylesford

Saturday 12th November 2005
7pm for 7.30pm

Cost £10.00 per head
(includes food and entertainment but please bring own drink)

All proceeds towards Aylesford Bell Restoration Fund
Space is limited so tickets will be allocated on a first come first served basis

For further details please contact Tina Bastow
01622 710607 or e-mail bastow@freeuk.com

EACH TOWER – PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN THIS FORM TO YOUR
DISTRICT RINGING MASTER – Sue Bassett at (for use in a window envelope):-

Mrs JS Bassett
23 Hanmer Way
Staplehurst
TONBRIDGE, Kent.
TN12 0NR

Telephone: 01580 891917

LIST FOR WEDDING RINGERS WHO ARE GENERALLY AVAILABLE

Home Tower:.....

Name	Telephone	Email	Weekdays?	Saturdays?

Any comments:-

TRAINING EVENTS REQUESTS

HOME TOWER..... TOWER RESPONDENT.....

Name	Telephone	Email	Describe what training is wanted and how much extra help is needed.	Preferred tower, day(s) and time

Success again for All Saints' Maidstone

The 2005 District Striking Contest was held at Barming on Saturday 11th June. Alas only three bands took part this year, one of which was the host tower.

We were honoured to have as our judges this year our County Chairman Eric Roughley of Tonbridge District together with Nick Wilkins of Rochester District. Each band rang a test piece of 240 changes in a method of their own choice, and before presenting the trophy to the winning band the judges made some constructive comments on the performance of each band.

Once again the winners this year were **All Saints Maidstone** with just 11½ faults, and All Saints' ringer Martin Pring is seen here collecting the trophy. Runners-up were East Farleigh, with host band Barming coming a creditable 3rd.

Our grateful thanks go to Eric and Nick for judging the contest for us. We are only sorry we couldn't provide them with more bands to judge!

Full results of the Contest are on the right.

STOP PRESS! We have just heard that All Saints' Maidstone finished runners-up in the County six-bell Competition. Our heartiest congratulations to them!



Winners	
All Saints, Maidstone	11½ faults
2nd place	
East Farleigh	24½ faults
3rd place	
Barming	28 faults

KCACR 125th Anniversary Celebrations

Some of our more mature readers will no doubt remember the KCACR hundredth anniversary, which was celebrated at Canterbury Cathedral on 17 May 1980, when no fewer than 700 people gathered in the quire and, as *The Ringing World* put it, "sang the hymns . . . with the fervour and enjoyment that only bellringers know how".

On 14th May 2005 we once again headed to Canterbury for our 125th birthday party. The focal point of the celebrations was a wonderful service in the Quire of the Cathedral, led by a choir of ringers ably conducted by Craig Huxley. The address was given by the Rt Rev David Say, formerly Bishop of Rochester and a Vice President of the Association. Now 91 years young, his message from the pulpit was as strong and compelling as ever.

The service was followed by a group photograph taken outside the Cathedral, in the same manner as those taken for the 50th and centenary celebrations in 1930 and 1980 respectively. Lunch and speeches followed,

after which time was well spent renewing old acquaintances and reminiscing.

Shown below are the memorabilia items being produced by the KCACR to commemorate our 125th anniversary.

The glass tankard is £5, the mug is £3 and the ballpoint is a mere 25p. All three items are now available from Richard Barclay on 01580 890247 or e-mail richardbarclay@kcacr-maidstone-district.org.uk.



District Events

There have been several events in the Maidstone District, or involving District ringers, since the last issue of *The Belfry*.

Firstly, it was pleasing to see that our District entered the **Inter District 8-bell Striking Contest** this year, coming fifth with 65 faults. All six Districts entered the contest on 26th February, the test piece being a touch of Erin Triples on the back eight at Beckenham. The winners were Rochester District with 23 faults with Ashford not far behind with 26. Our District was represented by Sue Bassett, Debbie Goacher, David Bassett, Mike Birkbeck, Patrick Harrisson, Chris Bassett, David Grimwood (conductor) and Roy Barclay.

Although there was no District Meeting in March, a number of District ringers went to the **County AGM** at Otford on Easter Monday. A brief report of what was a very enjoyable day can be found on the County website at www.kcacr.org.uk.

The **Spring Quarterly Meeting** on 9th April was unique in that it was the first to be held on a Saturday morning. It was something of a gamble as to whether people would be prepared to turn out on what for many is the busiest time of the week. In the event there was a very impressive attendance of well over twenty at St Michael and All Angels, Maidstone, and it was possible to ring several courses of both the special methods, Double Norwich and Plain Bob, as well as a variety of other methods from Rounds and Call Changes upwards. There was the usual ringers "tea", provided free by the St Michael's ladies to whom we are very grateful. The short business meeting dealt with routine matters and also looked at the proposed rule change for the Call Change Striking Contest. Alas, there were no new members put forward for election at the meeting.

On Saturday 14th May the Kent County Association of Change Ringers celebrated their **125th Anniversary** with a service at

Canterbury Cathedral followed by a three-course luncheon. A number of Maidstone District ringers went to the event which was a great occasion. A photo was taken of all those present at the Cathedral and a preview of this and also photos taken at the luncheon can be found by visiting the KCACR website, where a full report will be available in due course.

Making the normal Leeds practice night into an open **Surprise Practice** was something of a gamble, but it paid off handsomely. Although there were only ten people there we still managed courses of Cambridge and Yorkshire Major, Cambridge and Norwich Minor, touches of Stedman Triples and, to round it all off, a touch of Grandsire Caters. A few more people would have made it even better (and a little less tiring for those who went!).

The **District Striking Contest** was held at Barming on Saturday 11th June. A report of this competition is on page 9.

Around twenty people turned up for the **July Quarterly Meeting** at Hunton. This is the second successive meeting to show an upward trend in attendance, and is particularly impressive for the summer quarterly which has always been one of the poorest attended. As well as the basic methods we also rang Norwich and Bourne Surprise Minor. Strangely one of the special methods, Kent, wasn't rung because no one wanted to ring it! Three new members were elected at the meeting, and their names are on page 2.

Alas, the trend in attendances was sharply reversed at the **joint meeting** with the Quex Park ringers in August. Just two of the District's 201 practising members bothered to turn up to the event. There were probably 199 good reasons why the other 99% didn't go, but it was nevertheless a very embarrassing situation for all involved.

**Tired of waiting to see that single tower copy of The Belfry?
Well, now you can get your very own copy on-line and
you will get it before the hard copy version is even printed
...and it is free!**

**To add your name to the circulation list e-mail
subscribe@kcacr-maidstone-district.org.uk**

THREE COUNTIES TOUR

By Wendy Borer

On a bright sunny day in mid-March a group of Maidstone area ringers set off for a tour of Somerset, Dorset and Wiltshire.

The first meeting point was, as with all good ringing tours, the pub and on this occasion lunch was taken at the "Butt of Sherry" in Mere. Having refreshed ourselves we set off for the first ring of the tour, Motcombe in Wiltshire. This church, together with the second in Kingston Magna greeted us with strong smells of the countryside – someone was certainly laying it on thick! The third tower in North Cheriton was adjacent to the lovely North Cheriton Manor House and as soon as the bells began to ring we were visited by the Lord of the Manor, himself a bell-ringer and interested in our tour.

Our Hotel for the two nights was the "Globe Trotters at the Alex" in Yeovil and once unpacked it was off to find somewhere to eat.

After a reasonable night's sleep, once the disco switched off at 1.00 a.m. and a very hearty breakfast it was off to Ash in Martlock. On arrival the church was shrouded in mist but by the time we reached All Saints in Martlock in was another lovely sunny day. Parking in the pub car park caused consternation as, having obtained permission to park from the owner, the cook then proceeded to attach notices to each car stating that, although they did not mind us parking we should be further down the car park as the pub now looked full and business would be lost. Having explained that we were only there for an hour the notices were hastily removed with full apologies.

There were two further rings in Shepton Beauchamp and South Petherton followed by lunch at the Brewers Arms. Thanks to Chris the meals had all been pre-ordered and we



were able to enjoy an excellent lunch as a group.

Three further towers today and it's back to the Hotel for a "wash and brush up" before venturing out to eat. It was hoped to arrange a group meal for this evening but things did not go quite to plan and most managed something to eat, albeit a little late.

Having enduring another noisy disco it was up bright and early ready for the day ahead. The first ring on Palm Sunday was at Sherbourne Abbey and as we arrived the Abbey stood out majestically in the early morning mist.

As a non-ringer I seldom climb to the ringing chamber, especially when it is high in the church tower. However, on this occasion, I felt it was the thing to do. Having ascended some very narrow passageways and staircases, we alighted into the daylight – not the ringing chamber but the roof. It felt more like the sweep scene from Mary Poppins than a ringing tour.

We did eventually enter a very large chamber and I was pleased I had made the effort. There was a large group of ringers and the bells, including the 46cwt tenor, had to be rung up. This was left to a short, jolly lady wearing a very fetching pair of shorts who had to stand on a box to even reach the rope.

From here it was on to Milbourne Port and Lillington. Lillington, a very petite, beautiful church which seems to stand in a farmyard and does not appear to have a large congregation.

The lunch stop today was at the Three Elms in North Wooten. An extremely interesting pub which houses a vast number of dinky toys displayed in numerous cabinets around the walls. On inspection we even found a toy "Taylors" lorry carrying a church bell. The toilet walls were even more entertaining as all the walls were covered in rude postcards – we could hear Dot laughing from inside the pub.

After a hearty lunch it was off to Manston where, in the grounds of the church stands a large concrete mausoleum. The building was erected to house the coffins of people wishing to be cremated, the first being the vicar's wife who laid in her lead coffin for forty years until cremation became legal.

The final ring of a very enjoyable weekend was at Marnhull and it was then time to say our thanks to our organisers and our farewells.

But there was still one twist in the tale. Having switched off the lights, shut the doors and left the church one lonely, solitary bell began to peal. We had not let anyone into the church so who was missing!! It was your Editor himself, Mr Barclay. Having availed himself of the facilities, came out to find the church in darkness and, thinking he was locked in, rang

the bell to summon help. No one in the party was in any great hurry to help and he found that the door was, in fact, still open.

Our thanks to Dot and Mal for their hard work in making this another extremely good weekend.

Progress at Aylesford.....

Aylesford decided to hold a Tower Open Day on Sunday July 3rd as part of the run up to the re-hanging this winter. We were uncertain of the likely take up but thought it was worth a go as part of community relations and to support our application for Heritage Lottery funding. We confirmed insurance cover, and arranged a display to do with Aylesford's bells and ringers in the back of the church. This included our handbell set which people could try out and some delightful personal accounts of learning to ring from Beth and Samantha, our young trainees. And we arranged publicity through the Kent Messenger, local radio and local government web sites.

To our delight it turned out to be a great success with around 100 visitors attending, many local but some from afar (even overseas). The views from the top of the tower were breathtaking, as was the ascent up the ladders! Hearts pounded, and bells and ears were ringing but people really seemed to

appreciate the opportunity to find out about the tower, the bells and ringing. Our youngsters lost their fear of heights, and in doing so instilled a new fear in those supervising them!

Our thanks are due to all those who helped in the preparations, the visiting ringers (David Pye and Graham Heath) who came to help us demonstrate ringing, and to the good support from the congregation. Raising money was not our prime object but we did that too; £130 towards the restoration fund was raised by donation (admission was free). We also found a number of potential new recruits and, we hope, some good publicity for the parish and for ringing with the Kent Messenger taking a number of photos. In view of the success we are considering whether to mount further events during the remainder of the summer.

Gordon Hunt

.....and at Nettlestead

Refurbishment and augmenting of Nettlestead Bells — Phase one.

On 31st July we rang for service for the last time and on Monday 1st August we started to prepare the bells for lowering. Three of us removed the wheels and fittings from the bells and started to get the parts of the lifting frame ready to go up the belfry. It arrived from Whitechapel as a kit of parts rather like a Meccano set.

Early on Saturday 6th Brian Butcher, the KCACR Bell Restoration Officer and his band of stalwarts, including Peter Romney, arrived. The first job was to assemble Whitechapel's lifting frame in position over the bell frame. By lunchtime the first bell, the No.2, was ready to be lowered on to the church floor.

Because of the situation of the organ the bells had first to be lowered into the ringing chamber and then taken out of the window into the

church on a scaffold, and lowered from there onto the church floor. The rest of the bells followed without any real problems and were taken up to the road on a hand cart and from there on to a trailer and went to Whitechapel on the Monday morning.

Our five bells are being augmented to six, and a new treble has already been cast for us by Whitechapel where it is awaiting the arrival of the other five so that they can all be tuned together. In the meantime the Nettlestead band is practising in local towers, with kind offers of help from the tower captains of Wateringbury, Yalding and Hunton.

It is hoped that the bells will be rededicated on 10th October. The Anglicans and Catholic congregations share Nettlestead church, and the ringing, so the bells will be blessed jointly by the Anglican and Catholic Bishops.

Michael Cowles



TRAINING SUBCOMMITTEE

2005 /6

Putting in the Bobs

Saturday 29 October - booking by 1 September

Day course on elementary conducting. We expect to run basic groups on Plain Bob Doubles/Minor and Grandsire. Please remember to book soon. There will be limited spaces

County Elementary Ringing Schools

Friday 31 March 2006 - booking by 16 February

Exact activities in each group will depend on individual requirements. All groups are likely to discuss appropriate bellhandling and listening skills. Groups will be arranged according to bookings on the following topics:

Rounds and Call Changes - ringing accurately and understanding call changes, calling changes (if there's demand)

Plain Hunting - ropesight, accuracy and general awareness

Plain Bob or Grandsire Doubles - plain courses and touches

Individual bookings please by due date giving name, address, phone number and email (if any). Further information/bookings for the above:

Catherine Lewis (01959 563767, cmlewis@btopenworld.com)

TSC members: Peter Dale, Neil Jones, Judith de Leeuw, Catherine Lewis, Don Niblett, Roger Pocock, Mike Worthington (ex officio: Cathryn Hills, Margaret Funnell, Eric Roughley)

For more information see the KCACR website (kcacr.org.uk)

Canterbury Cathedral 12-bell practices

Minimum standard Grandsire Cinques

Thursday 29 September 7.15 pm and Saturday 26 November 6 - 8 pm.

Further details from Hazel Basford (01227 861144, hazel@basford.com)

The Cinque Ports Ringing Centre at Dover

Basic Skills

Weekly sessions are held on Saturday mornings from 10 to 12, concentrating on practice in basic skills such as bell handling, raising and lowering, rounds and good striking. No booking is required; contact Barbara Dale for a street map and advice about car parking - email barbaradale@fastmail.fm or tel 01304 823217.

For more about the Centre see the article on page 3.

Trafalgar Celebrations

At the July Quarterly at Hunton Charles Tassell spoke about the proposed forthcoming celebrations to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Nelson's victory at the battle of Trafalgar. The celebrations are to be held on 21st—23rd October and two charities (Seafarers UK and Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution) would benefit through charity lunches, etc. Beacons may be lit over the South East on Friday 21st and special Church services held on Sunday 23rd when it was requested that all church bells should be rung. The organisers had asked to be notified of what takes place. The District Committee has suggested that we could take the opportunity to combine this with a **quarter peal weekend**.

District Ringing Master Sue Bassett is organising this event. Please let her know if your tower is likely to be ringing and whether you need any assistance (ringers, conductors or practice). After the event, please report back to the Ringing Master with details of your achievements. A copy should also be sent (preferably by e-mail) to the editor of *The Belfry* at thebelfry@kcacr-maidstone-district.org.uk.

Even if your tower is unable to ring a quarter peal we hope that you will still be able to ring for the celebrations on Sunday 23rd October.

Roy Barclay
District Publicity Officer

The winning numbers so far this year in the 120 Club Draw are:



March:

6 (£20) Harrietsham Tower
46 (£15) Keith (*Stansted*)
38 (£10) Jennifer (*Boughton Monchelsea*)

April:

86 (£20) Freda (*Staplehurst*)
70 (£15) Darren (*Luton*)
31 (£10) Peter (*Maidstone*)

May:

100 (£20) Richard (*Yalding*)
63 (£15) Tom (*Maidstone*)
105 (£10) Andrew (*Harrietsham*)

June:

8 (£40) Dot (*Maidstone*)
72 (£30) Wateringbury Tower
18 (£20) Nick (*West Malling*)

July:

100 (£20) Richard (*Yalding*)
22 (£15) Rosemary (*Boughton Monchelsea*)
8 (£10) Dot (*Maidstone*)

August:

26 (£20) Sue (*Snodland*)
120 (£15) Jackie (*Staplehurst*)
115 (£10) Sue (*Snodland*)

Winners have been notified.

Remember that results are available 24 hours a day on the 120 Club's very own website at:

www.kcacr-maidstone-district.org.uk/120Club

Belfry Reminiscences

10 years ago the August 1995 edition of *The Belfry* was issue no 47, and its publication coincided with a particularly quiet summer on the ringing front. The Editorial, however, gave some food for thought, debating as it did the imposition of VAT on bell restoration work. In our own District this threatened to delay the proposed restoration project at Staplehurst, a report of which also appeared in Issue 47.

There were congratulations to six of the District Officers who successfully ran a peal in 4 Minor Methods on the far from easy bells at Hunton, whilst on a sadder note *The Belfry* had to report the deaths of Gordon Buss, who had been a member of the Association for more than 60 years, and of Christopher Barber, formerly a ringer at Wrotham.

There were no less than 23 achievements reported, whilst All Saints Maidstone easily won the Striking Competition at Chart Sutton from a poor entry of only four bands.

15 years ago Issue No 28 of *The Belfry* appeared in September 1990 at the end of a long hot summer. There had been a gap of four months since the previous issue, so there was quite a lot to report including humorous write-ups on ringing tours to the Isle of Wight (organised by Janet Yeo) and to North Yorkshire (Nigel Baker). Ringing - and its associated social life - seemed so much more fun then, - or is it just nostalgia? Also featured in Issue 28 was the first of a series by Peter Blythe on alternative techniques of bell control. Incidentally Peter is now resident near Winchester and has his own mini-ring of 12 in his garage.

Belfry Gossip included news of the marriage of Jim Eagle of Ulcombe and Veronica Grover (Footh Cray). Although Jim no longer rings, following a heart attack some years ago, Ronni still rings at Ulcombe. Not so good was the news that, after being close runners up for the previous few years, Maidstone District had come last in the County 8-bell Striking Contest at Westerham.

A look at Future Events in the autumn of 1990 makes interesting reading. In November, for example, there was the Call Change Contest on the second Saturday, a Barn Dance on the third, a joint meeting with the Ashford District on the fourth followed two weeks later by the District Carol Service. Then there were the monthly Surprise Major and bi-monthly Surprise Royal practices. All were quite well supported. So what has gone wrong?

20 Years ago in July 1985 the Editorial to Issue No 15 looked at the question of fire hazard in the belfry. This was prompted by a fire which destroyed the then new ring of twelve at All Saints, Leighton Buzzard, and the public horror of the fire at Bradford City Football Ground a few weeks later. The latter had apparently been caused by junk underneath the wooden stand - a situation not dissimilar to some towers with wooden frames and cladding and often used as a storeroom for church junk. Fortunately just as safety has become a priority at football grounds, so do most towers these days take the risk of fire seriously, take precautions and have established evacuation procedures.

The County AGM was held in the Maidstone District in 1985 and the News and Views column (now *Belfry Gossip*) noted that it was perhaps appropriate that at the meeting Tom Cullingworth had the honour of being elected an Honorary Vice-President of the Association. In the same column *The Belfry's* Editor Roy Barclay announced his engagement to Sallyann Farmer of Headcorn.

In 1985 the Association lost a much respected member with the death of George Cantrill of All Saints, Maidstone. *The Belfry* of July 1985 carried an obituary on George.

In 1985 we still had a well-supported Quarter-peal Weekend. Issue 15 reported that between 17th - 21st May 16 quarters and one peal had been attempted of which 11 quarters and the peal were successful. Some 65 ringers and 15 towers (including Nettlestead and the now unringable West Farleigh) were involved, and there were 25 firsts of various kinds.

The most successful tower of that era was probably Watringbury, who always attracted a good attendance on practice night. In the summer of 1985 they won the District Striking Competition for the second successive year with a winning margin of 24 faults over All Saints Maidstone.

Future Events

Well, summer is now drawing swiftly to a close, although at the time of writing the temperatures are approaching the 90s. With the onset of autumn the District programme gets into full swing again, and events for the rest of the year are on the District Calendar which is on the inside back cover. Could Tower Captains/Secretaries please detach it and place prominently on their tower notice-boards.

Remember that you can also check out future events by visiting the District website *Maidstone District OnLine* at www.kcacr-maidstone-district.org.uk and choosing "Calendar of Events". This is now particularly useful if events are arranged in between issues of *The Belfry*.

October brings us round once more to the **Annual District Meeting** which this year is being held at Leeds on Saturday 8th October. Timings are as follows: Ringing from 3pm, Service (now the only one of the year!) at 4.30pm, followed by tea at approximately 5.15pm. The Business Meeting is likely to start at about 5.45pm and there will be further opportunities to ring on Leeds' famous ten bells after the Meeting. The ADM is the time when members can have their say on what happens in the District in the coming year, and to vote in the District Committee for the coming year. So do try to attend; better still why not stand for election? A number of the existing Committee have indicated that they do not wish to stand for re-election so there will be a number of posts up for grabs. New blood is, in any case, always welcome. Contact any existing Committee member for more details.

The **Call Change Striking Contest** this year will be held this year at Ightham on Saturday 12th November. The draw will be at 2.30pm in the church with ringing starting at 2.45pm. This is a good opportunity for those less experienced ringers to participate in competition ringing, so if your tower has never entered a Striking Contest before, now's the chance. In addition to the winner's shield there is also one for the most improved band. Towers will be receiving full details nearer the event.

Also on Saturday 12th November the Aylesford ringers are holding a **Candlelit Soiree and Entertainment** at the Brassey Centre, Station Road, Aylesford in aid of their Bell Restoration

Fund. The time is 7pm for 7.30pm and the cost £10.00 per head which includes your food and entertainment but please bring your own drink. Space is limited so tickets will be allocated on a first come first served basis. For further details please contact Tina Bastow (Tower Correspondent) 01622 710607 or bastow@freeuk.com.

Hard though it is to believe, it is less than three months to Christmas, and with it the annual round of Carol Services. The **District Carol Service** is always that little bit special, but this year there is an extra incentive to come along. It is being held at Nettlestead, where there will be ample opportunity to try out the augmented and rehung ring of six bells. As usual we hope to have mulled wine and mince pies afterwards. The date is Saturday 10th December, there will be ringing from 4pm and the Carol Service starts at 5pm.

Looking ahead, the first event of 2006 is the **District Quarterly Meeting**, which will be held on Saturday 14th January. The provisional venue is Marden but this is subject to confirmation. This meeting is likely to follow the usual Quarterly format, commencing at 5pm and finishing at 8.00pm with a short break from 6.30 - 7pm for tea and business meeting. There will be no service. The Quarterly Meeting will be preceded by the **annual Tower Captains' Meeting** starting at 4pm.

It is hoped that the full programme for 2006 will be confirmed shortly after the ADM. When available, it will be posted on the District website.

Any updates or revisions to the above events will be notified to towers and will, of course also be posted on the website.

Articles for publication in the
The Belfry
should be sent to the Editor
at the address on page one
or e-mail to
belfry@kcacr-maidstone-district.org.uk

Please limit articles to one side
of A4 if possible



MAIDSTONE DISTRICT CALENDAR

Autumn 2005

Saturday 8th October
ANNUAL DISTRICT MEETING at LEEDS

Ringing from 3pm, Service 4.30pm, Tea 5pm
Followed by Business Meeting at 5.45pm approx
Further ringing in the evening

Saturday 12th November
CALL CHANGE STRIKING CONTEST at IGHTHAM

Draw 2.30pm

Saturday 10th December
DISTRICT CAROL SERVICE at NETTLESTEAD

Ringing from 4pm
Service 5pm

Saturday 14th January
QUARTERLY MEETING at MARDEN
(subject to confirmation)
Ringing from 5pm - 8pm
with break from 6.30 - 7pm for tea and short Business Meeting

Please note that this will be preceded at 4pm by the
ANNUAL TOWER CAPTAINS' MEETING

~ ~ ~

For updates visit Maidstone District OnLine at
www.kcacr-maidstone-district.org.uk
or contact the District Secretary