

District Chairman's Report to the Annual District Meeting 2011

This year the district has seen a fantastic revival, district events have on the whole been very well attended and nearly all of them an improvement on the same time last year. The ringing at district events has been variable but has always had a clear purpose; we are normally able at practices to achieve a good standard of ringing to both surprise minor and major methods. This core of ringers allows us to cater to ringers of all levels, who may want to come along to practice anything from called changes upwards.

One slightly different event this year was the "come back to the district" event, this took the form of a barbeque at the home of Roy & Sallyann Barclay. To start there was ringing on the ten bells at Staplehurst, followed by a barbeque and general ringing on the Trafford mini-ring, the evening concluded with a rather light-hearted competition on the mini-ring, being judged by three non-ringers who judged on general quality and artistic impression. Thanks to Roy & Sallyann for hosting and to Sallyann Barclay, Debbie & Andrew Brady and Malcolm Hitchcock for cooking.

The other "big" event this year was the district outing, around 45 ringers started the day by filling the large ringing chamber of St. Martin in the Fields (12), the ringing here included some peoples first blows on twelve as well as Stedman Cinques and Little Bob Maximus. We then visited several other towers, and I daresay a few pubs (ahem), finishing up at St. Margaret's Westminster.

Other events this year have on the whole been very well attended, the only slightly concerning exceptions being the district striking competition and the planned district dinner. The striking competition was won by default by All Saints' Maidstone who then went on to ring a quarter peal with the judges. All Saints' then went on to come a very close second in the county striking competition.

The Maidstone district also entered the county eight-bell competition where we were placed fourth, the test piece was a plain course of Uxbridge Surprise Major.

It is important to remember that outside the actual district run ringing events there is some fantastic work being done by individuals and groups to further the exercise. Since January this year 41 peals have been rung in the district (around one a week). The majority of the thanks for this goes to John Keeler who organises regular peals in Maidstone. Notable peals this year included a peal for the retiring rector of Staplehurst, where the peal included three firsts, first of Surprise Royal for Chris & Sue Bassett, and first on ten for Steve Bassett. Congratulations to Jackie Barlow who rang her first peal of seven Surprise Minor and to several ringers who reached significant numbers together notably John Keeler who notched up his 200th on the 9th at All Saints! First peals were rung in two methods, River Medway Surprise and Octodecmin Alliance Royal.

Finally after enough rambling, a huge thank you to the district committee for all the work they have done this year, I hope that we will be able to keep the same decisive and to the point attitude with our new committee after the ADM this year, it is the officious mentality of everyone that has enabled us to run what I believe are good events, tailored to the current needs of the district. While I would be incredibly sad to see anyone leave the committee this year, I cannot stress how much we need the input of many people and new fresh ideas, so please do not be afraid to stand, there are also of course positions for non-portfolio members of the committee, with no actual jobs to do, these are excellent positions if you would like some input into the running of the district whilst refraining from any unwanted responsibility.

And finally, a huge thank you to you, the ringers who have attended district events this year, without your continued support events like ours would not be able to survive, so thank you. Please continue to support the events that are run, and try to encourage other people from your towers to attend as well!

Daniel Brady
District Chairman
06/10/2011

District Secretary's report to the Annual District meeting – 8th October 2011

This completes my second year as secretary and despite being extremely busy and, in truth, wishing I didn't have this job, it is, none the less, actual enjoyable. We are lucky not to have a committee that over indulges in red tape or officialdom; we have a committee that just does what is needed to be done. The committee work together and I suppose we've adopted a "Your idea, you do it" attitude. This was shown through the "come back to the District" event in May and the Outing to London in August. Both of these were ably arranged by you Ringing Master/s and Chairman, with no work require by me at all. I reiterate my apologies from last year for my bad English, spelling and grammar, I do try but it's not my forte. 3 attempts to get a grade 'C' English O' Level, now that dates me! I apologise for not being present at a number of meetings this year.

The district Calendar has been well supported this year and my thanks goes to all the tower correspondence who have worked for us in getting the bells, and sorting out teas and refreshments .

During the past year we have had a number of long standing members of the association pass away. Kevin Fulcher (Staplehurst), Roger Groves (Barming - non-ringing husband of Freda Groves), Freda Tomlin (Staplehurst), Ken Williamson (Stockbury), have all left a mark on the exercise in this District and shall be missed, along with anyone else who's passing I am unaware of at writing.

The District Call Change Competition was held last November at East Sutton and won by Staplehurst. The District 6 bell competition was won by All Saint's, Maidstone, by default. They were the only team to enter, which sparked discussion on whether we should change the format of this event. It was decided to keep the same format for 2012 and see if it was just a "blip" this year. All Saint's, Maidstone went on to represent the district at the County 6 bell competition at Hunton, coming a very creditable 2nd place by only half a fault!

Unlike last year, when we only had 3 new members, we have had 18 so far this year, a bit more encouraging. As an aside I heard some statistics recently which say that about 1000 bell-ringers are lost each year. On average 1 in 10 of learners stay bell-ringing, that means 10000 new recruits are needed each year to stop bellringing dieing out. This sounds an impossible task, but there are some 6000 towers in the country so if each tower aims to train 2 ringers a year, then this target should be met. Let's see how many towers in our district can achieve this next year.

Designed and constructed by your Chairman, Daniel Brady, the district sports a brand new look website. If you're not seen it yet, do go and view and use it. It's by far the best KCACR district website, I think so anyway.

Unfortunately the proposed District Dinner which was planned for the end of September had to be cancelled due to lack of numbers, this was disappointing, but on the whole most district events where well attended.

Thank you all for your help and support over the past year, and I'm quite happy to stand again in the coming year should you want me. But, given it usually takes years to find a replacement secretary, going on past history, I ask now that anyone who wants the job to please come forward, and please start twisting the arms of prospective replacements for me.

Mike Birkbeck
District Secretary
3rd October 2011

Maidstone District Ringing Master's report 2010 – 2011

This year we continued to try to encourage more members to attend district events, and accordingly continued to organise different events aimed at ringers of different capabilities.

The regular monthly practices have had varying levels of attendance from 24 at our May practice at Nettlestead to only 7 at Watringbury last month. While this benefitted two of the ringers who gained intensive practice it would be good to have had more attendees. We are happy to accommodate requests for any standard of ringing so please don't be intimidated and come along to try something new or to practise something you are learning at your own tower with a stable band to help you. Please give feedback if you think there is something we can do differently or better.

This year's joint outing to Westminster with the Ashford District provided an opportunity to ring on higher numbers and at different towers, and this was well attended by more than 40 ringers of all levels. Particular highlights included ringing at St Martin in the Fields and St Margaret's Westminster.

Prior to the outing we organised a beginners 12 bell practice at Benenden, where we practiced rounds and call changes on 12, and plain hunt and Grandsire Caters.

As ringing masters our goal is to provide opportunities for individual ringers to improve their own ringing ability. The more events that individuals attend the more chances they have to improve: ringing at different towers promotes confidence in handling bells including in your own tower; ringing with different bands may provide a more stable environment for trying something new where you are the only learner, or attempting to call a touch. Please let us know what you would like to ring at these events.

Daniel Brady & James Sawle
Ringing Masters

KCACR MAIDSTONE DISTRICT ADM – SATURDAY 8th OCTOBER 2011
Publicity Officer's Report

The Belfry in its more concise format has continued to appear quarterly, although sometimes not quite in time for District Quarterly Meetings. However precise publication dates do not carry such importance now that most towers receive their copies by e-mail, and it can also be viewed and printed from the District website. A considerable number of individual members have their own copy e-mailed to them. Anyone can join the list by e-mailing belfry@kcacr-maidstone-district.org.uk – it costs you and the Association absolutely nothing.

The District website has recently been completely revamped in line with modern web design, making it more appealing to visitors and more straightforward to navigate. Indeed in its first month the new site notched up more than 550 hits compared with an average of less than 100 per month on the previous site. The address remains the same: www.kcacr-maidstonedistrict.org.uk.

Members who are lucky enough to possess a smart phone can now also access the District website whilst on the move via the QR code below. To do this, firstly if you haven't already got a QR code reader on your phone download one from your apps store; then look through your phone's camera viewfinder at the image below and the website should open automatically. If it doesn't, just tap "open" on the app menu.

Many District communications will in future carry this code, thus broadening access to District information. At least in the technology stakes we are ahead of the rest!

Roy Barclay
Publicity Officer
3rd October 2011