



Northern District Newsletter

March 2006

Annual District Meeting votes in 2 new Masters

On Saturday 7th January the Annual Meeting of the Northern District was held at Wethersfield, following a good warming supper served by the home team to 47 people.

During the meeting current Deputy District Master, **Marian Wood** (Stebbing) was elected District Master, **Andy Smith** (Halstead) was elected as the new Deputy Master, and **Peter Smith** (Braintree) was elected District Secretary. See below where Andy and Peter introduce themselves.

The meeting, including Association Master Steve Nash, thanked both Alistair Donaldson and Ian Hamilton for their support of District and Association activities during their term of office. The meeting then went on to welcome 9 new members to the District: Sarah Leigh (*Belchamp St. Paul*); Anne Slater and Janet Curmi (*Rayne*); Phil Ratcliff (*Black Notley*); Vicki LeFevre (*Felsted*); Vic and Wendy Turner (*Unattached*); Joyce Smith (*Bocking*); and Patrick Alexander (*Shalford*).

The Master reported that 20 peals and 142 Quarters were rung in the District in 2005, slightly down on the number rung in 2004 (125th Anniversary), but considerably up on those rung only 4 years before - showing the District to be in good health! The Ringing School continues to flourish under Marian & Peter Wood's leadership, and, though attendance at the Advanced Practice waned for a while it has improved recently. New for 2005 was the Intermediate Practice covering methods from Little Bob to Surprise minor.

The Young Ringers group has grown under Roy & Cherry Threadgold, Nick and Sarah Holland - winning the Founders Prize. A Certificate of Special Achievement was presented to one of the Young Ringers, Daniel Smith (*Pebmarsh*), whose 2005 score was 11 peals, one as conductor; and 45 quarters, 22 as conductor!



Anyone for a Fun Day?

SE District have challenged us to a "Fun Day" on **Sunday 25th June** - with a Rounders match favoured. Please let Peter Smith know if you are interested in making up the Team.....

A Christmas Story ...

At Christmas Eve Roger Fleming went to open up at Alphamstone just before midnight - and found a card on his "ringers chair" marked "Roger: to be opened at Midnight"... it was a card from Revd. Margaret King, Team Vicar. "Thanks for ringing on this special night. Bells survive the generations; Bellringers heard, but sometimes not seen or even acknowledged, the silent helpers who give the bells their voice. Ringers who move in mysterious ways from church to church, who carry in their heads complex numerical patterns to allow the bells to call to our communities. A Big Thank You, God Bless"

District Events

- **Wednesday 19th April:** District Practice at Great Bardfield, 7:30 to 9pm.
- **Saturday 6th May:** Service and District Meeting at Braintree. The Service is at 4:30pm with ringing from 3:30pm; Tea & Meeting from 5:30pm. Evening ringing is at Stisted from 7:30 to 9pm.
- **Saturday 3rd June:** District Striking Competition at Great Yeldham - draw at 6pm. Call Change and Changes sections will be open: **Do** put in a team!
- **Friday 23rd June:** District Practice at Gosfield, 7:30 to 9pm.
- **Wednesday 19th July:** District Practice at Belchamp St. Paul, 7:30 to 9pm.
- **Saturday 12th August:** District Picnic & BBQ at Finchingfield; home of Graham & Sue Tobbell by the Church - with pool!
- **Friday 25th August:** District Practice at Colne Engaine, 7:30 to 9pm.

District Quarter Peal Week from 1st to 15th September

- **Friday 6th October:** District Practice at Rayne, 7:30 to 9pm.
- **Saturday 28th October:** Service and District Meeting at Kelvedon. The Service is at 4:30pm with ringing from 3:30pm; Tea & Meeting from 5:30pm. Evening ringing is at Felsted from 7:30 to 9pm.

Association Events

- Monday 1st May:** Association Annual General Meeting at Chelmsford Cathedral. There will be general ringing from 9:15 to 10:15am, followed at 10:30 by the Association Service. The AGM will follow at around 11:30am. There will then be a ringing tour around the NW District, with tea at Stansted. Tea tickets from Mary Bone, Association Secretary
- Saturday 1st July:** Association Striking Competition in SE District. The draw for the 6-bell competition is usually at 1:30pm, with the draw for the 8-bell at 6pm after Tea.
- Saturday 7th October:** Association Dinner at the County Hotel, Chelmsford., near the railway station. Please book your tickets (+deposit) with Mary Bone ASAP.

District Officers for 2006:

Master: Marian Wood	(01371-856382)
Deputy: Andrew Smith	(01787-477073)
Secretary: Peter Smith	(01376-322094)
Treasurer: Di Carpenter	(01279-870414)

Under New Management

Introducing your new District Officers

Deputy Master, Andy Smith, writes: "I learned to ring at Barkingside in January 1977 at the age of 14, taught by Dennis Ellisdon. I progressed fairly quickly, ringing my first quarter peal after 6 weeks; and my first peal after months, ringing the tenor at Barkingside to Bob Triples on the Queen's Silver Jubilee day (June 7th) - which was also my 15th birthday! By the middle of 1978 I was ringing Surprise Major, and at the end of that year rang my first peal on the 10 of Bishops Stortford, ringing a new Surprise Royal method. From 1983 to 1996 I had to give up ringing at Barkingside due to work commitments. In 1999 I went to work at the Whitechapel Bellfoundry where I started off doing the bell moulding, but did lots of other jobs there, including furnace man, and went out on bell-hanging jobs. I was also learning bell tuning, and at one time was the only apprentice tuner in the country! I also had the delight of visiting Big Ben when the Foundry staff got invited to Westminster Tower. I left the Foundry in 2002 on moving up to Halstead, which is where I now do my ringing."

District Secretary, Peter Smith, writes: "I was taught to ring in 1948 by my elder brother Alan at St Andrews Biggleswade, at that time a surprise major band, and rang there for about 20 years. I was an active member of the Bedfordshire Association and for a time Tower Secretary at St. Andrews.

I dropped out of ringing for nearly 30 years, apart from ringing family peals, due to business commitments.

I am pleased that David Childs plucked me from the congregation at St. Michaels Braintree to help one Sunday when they were short. Since then I have a regular on Sundays and practice nights. Most of my ringing in Essex has been at Braintree where I have rung numerous quarters and 3 peals, supported the advance practice. I have also attended various Northern District events. This is my 3rd year as Tower Master and Tour Organiser."

Another Milestone?

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth is 80 this year: Her actual birthday is the 21st April, and Her Official Birthday is 17th June - the day of the Trooping the Colour on Horseguards Parade in London.

As many Towers as possible are encouraged to ring on both actual and Official birthdays at locally convenient times.

It is also suggested that Peals and Quarters should be rung for Her Majesty throughout the period between these two dates.

Please ensure that you announce locally in good time that any such special ringing is to celebrate the Queen's birthday.

Congratulations to:

First Peal

John Slater (31st December)

Antony Woolnough (1st January)

Lucy Jerram (18th February)

This Peal of Plain Bob Minor at Colne Engaine on 18th February included 3 ringers under 18 including conductor Dan Smith, with 3 supporters only just a little older.....

First Quarter Peal

Matthew Jerram (13th January)

Anne Slater (26th February)

Sam Buick (11) (26th February)

Other Notables

Matthew Jerram First inside

Daniel Smith - 50th Quarter

- 13 Spliced Surprise

- First Peal of Surprise Major as Conductor

Bradley Hill First of minor

Richard Dunhill 50th QP at Braintree

Peter Wood 150th peal

Debbie Hill First QP of Surprise & 25th Quarter

Ian Hamilton First Peal and First QP of Surprise

St. David's Day

6 Davids rang St. David Doubles at

Felsted on 1st March - Messrs

Learmonth, Pierce, Simms, Jarvis, Wallis and Sparling ©. (see RW p.248)

Diamond Wedding

A Quarter was rung on 6th October to celebrate the Diamond Wedding of Mabel and Fred Boniface (*Black Notley*)

Milestones

Queenie Brown (*Braintree*) was 75 on 9th February



Avoiding a Clanger at Felsted

On Sunday 20th November the 8 bells were ringing out when a heavy bang was heard from above the tenor/treble ringers. All looked suspiciously at the treble (newest ringer!) and both bells rung down. A quick trip upstairs showed that the slider on the tenor had broken! Later a closer examination showed the tenor clapper had broken off 2in from staple—hence the loud bang. Luckily the belfry floor proved thick enough to withstand this onslaught. Ringing continued on practice nights, minus clapper on tenor, with the simulator. The old clapper went away with Adrian Semken for a new one to be cast, and this arrived back on 6th December, being fitted and used just 3 weeks after breaking. The clapper is to a new design a little smaller than before, and sounds a little subdued, less dominant than before.

MORAL

- 1: Don't change your clappers just because the clapper ties don't fit any more
- 2: Check Belfry floor is STRONG
- 3: If in doubt - ring it down...

George Bellingham-Smith

Advanced Practices

These continue on the 3rd Saturday of each month at St. Michael's Braintree: please come along if you can ring Treble Bob hunt, Surprise minor or major, or Stedman triples or better. We also intend to ring some Caters and Royal methods during the evening whenever practicable.

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

Future practice dates: 20th May, 17th June, 15th July, 19th August, 16th September. Put them in your Diary *now!*

Beyond Bob Minor...

These sessions were previously known as "Intermediate Practices" and will take place on the 1st Saturday of the month unless a District event intervenes. Each session will start as usual with a short discussion and theory session from 7pm with actual ringing from 7:30 to 9pm.

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

A big "Thank you" to everyone, students and helpers, who have come along to past sessions - and then gone on to organise their own local practices.

Future Sessions:

5th August, London & Bourne Surprise Minor,

2nd September, St. Clements and Double Court.

4th November, Double Oxford & Oxford Treble Bob Minor.

Locations to be confirmed later

The Future of the Association?

Adrian Malton and Adrian Semken have written a short paper asking:

- Does ringing in Essex **NEED** any organisation such as an Association?
- Do we need to change anything?

Note that EACR official objectives are:

- *To further the work of the Church through ringing of bells*
- *To financially assist the Church to maintain and improve bell installations*

So:

- Do we meet EACR's objectives?
- Do we need the District structure?
- Are the old boundaries still relevant?

We will discuss these issues at the next District meeting - so please have a think about them, and, if you can't come, let an Officer know what you think.