

EA CR

NEWSLETTER

No. 7

August, 1990

Quite a full and varied NEWSLETTER this month with a strong emphasis on training. Thank you those who have sent items in - one or two have had to be held over. I hope all Essex ringers, whether Association members or not, will read the document enclosed with this NEWSLETTER and respond accordingly. Please make a note of the Association Training Day on Saturday, 29th September and encourage learners to attend as students and others as helpers. It is very difficult to organise tutors, helpers and towers if people leave it to the day before to book a place. So PHONE NOW before you forget and let's make it a successful and enjoyable day. AFC

What makes you "tick"?

A sub-committee meeting under the chairmanship of Don Cobb has been held to consider the implications of the C.C. Survey of Sunday service ringing. A copy of a paper written by Don is (or should be) with this NEWSLETTER.

Please read it. Then to help us consider how the Association could help you, could one member of your band prepare a short, honest profile of your band telling us why you think your tower is successful or not, as the case may be. This could include number of ringers and approximate age group, attitude of tower captain, recruiting policy, teaching policy, whether you hold regular practices and ring for Sunday service and anything else which is relevant. Please give or send these profiles to any of the following: Don Cobb, Fred or Mary Bone, Maurice or Kath Downs, Ann Chapman.

Training Day

On Saturday 29th September there will be a one-day training course at Church House, Braintree. Five sections are proposed as follows:

Plain hunting: students should be able to handle a bell competently in rounds and call changes.

Plain Bob Minor: students should be able to hunt the treble.

Introduction to Stedman: students should be familiar with simpler methods such as Plain Bob and Grandsire.

Introduction to Surprise Major: probably Yorkshire or Cambridge. Students should be familiar with simpler methods such as Plain Bob and Grandsire and be able to Treble Bob hunt.

Tower Maintenance

The day will start at 10.00 a.m. with theory sessions at Church House, Braintree (located behind St Michael the Archangel) followed by practical sessions at local towers. You will need to make your own arrangements for lunch but tea and coffee will be available at Church House. There will be more theory and practical sessions after lunch finishing at about 5.00 p.m. There will be a charge of £1.25 for Association members and £1.50 for non-members. If you want to make notes during the theory sessions you should bring pen and paper and students attending the tower maintenance section should dress suitably.

Don't be shy about coming. Get a ringing friend from your tower to come as well. Remember all the other students will feel the same!

Helpers will also be needed to ring with learners and you don't need to be an expert - provided you can ring plain hunt, Plain Bob Minor, Stedman or whatever competently you can help.

If you are able to help or would like to book a place on the course, please phone either Adrian Semken: 0376 561183 or Ann Chapman: 0245 358040 preferably by Sunday 23rd September.

The Northern District are holding a Pub Games evening at Colne Engine in the evening, which you are welcome to attend to round off the day.

Striking Competitions

On Saturday 12th May the Association came 5th (out of 7) in the Ridgmen Trophy 10-bell competition held at the Norman Tower, Bury St Edmunds.

The results of the Association 6-bell striking competition finals held at Thorpe-le-Soken and judged by Chris Osenton and Rhian Bagshaw were as follows:

1.	Kirby-le-Soken (10)	P. B. Doubles
2.	Chelmsford (12½)	P. B. Minor
3.	Degenham (13)	P. B. Doubles
4.	Prittlewell (14)	P. B. Doubles
5.	Barking (19)	P. B. Doubles
6.	Springfield (20)	P. B. Doubles
7.	Downham (21)	Grandsire Doubles
8.	Wethersfield (22)	P. B. Minor
9.	Colchester (Hythe) (24)	P. B. Minor
10.	Gosfield (55)	P. B. Minor

In the evening 5 districts participated in the 8-bell striking competition at Kirby and the results of this were:

1.	South-West (16)	Stedman
2.	South-East (19)	4-Spliced S.
3.	Southern (26)	Stedman
4.	Northern (27)	Plain & Little
5.	North-East (28)	Grandsire

DINNER DINNER DINNER

The dinner this year will be at the Marconi Club, Chelmsford on Saturday 13th October. The cost will be £18 (increase due to higher food prices). I hope as many members as possible will support the dinner again. Provisional bookings for next year have been made at The Rivenhall, near Witham (new banqueting suite currently being built) and Channels Golf Club, Little Waltham (beautiful setting but numbers would be limited). It is likely ticket prices will be at least £20.

Vegetarian meals are available for non meat-eaters provided you let me know in good time.

Please buy your tickets (strictly cash with order) for the dinner in good time - numbers are finalised after the Committee meeting on 6th October - from: Ann Chapman, 20 Mews Court, Chelmsford CM2 9PF.

HEREFORD

At Easter I was fortunate enough to be sponsored by the Essex Association to attend the Hereford Ringing Course. I had heard a great deal about the course, but still I was somewhat apprehensive as I set off on Thursday morning 19th April with Margaret Ta'Bois - the only person on the course that I knew. However, this fear was extremely short-lived. Very soon I realised that the course was going to be every bit as good as people had told me it would be.

The course consisted of a number of practical and theory sessions. For each practical session we went to a different tower, which, in itself, was all good experience for a learner like me. I was in the Plain Bob Major group and because most of the pupils in the group had rung this method before, we were able to ring with 3 learners at a time. As there were only 7 pupils in the group, assisted by 8 helpers and the tutor, this meant we all had a good ring. By the end of the weekend all 7 pupils with our tutor were able to ring a touch of Plain Bob Major as a team. All the helpers attached to our group were really friendly and always managed to help at just the right time and in just the right way. Each of the six towers we visited offered a good set of bells and all were situated in the beautiful Herefordshire countryside.

The theory consisted of a wide choice of lectures ranging from Computer Simulations to How Methods are Constructed and learning to ring handbells. I attended lectures on the Stedman Principle, the Construction of methods, Using 'Bob Minor Cards' for making touches and Computer Simulations. All were thoroughly interesting and made me even more aware of the vast amount there is to know about bell ringing.

In the evenings, after the working sessions were over, most of us went to the bar, which was a great opportunity to meet up with other ringers from different areas. Mealtimes were also a good opportunity for this as it generally took quite a while to get through all the delicious food that had been prepared for us.

I would recommend the course to anyone, however experienced or inexperienced they might be, and I will certainly return next year if I possibly can and would like to thank the Essex Association for giving me the opportunity to attend in April - it was a brilliant weekend.

Kathryn Boynton, Chigwell

If you would like to apply for sponsorship from the Association, please obtain an application form from your District Secretary or Ann Chapman.

Essex Course

Adrian Semken (Education Officer) is arranging a residential ringing course, along the lines of the very popular Hereford Course, for 1991. It will run from Tuesday 2nd to Friday 5th April and will be based at Writtle Agricultural College, just outside Chelmsford. The residential cost will be in the region of £100. Hopefully there will be plenty of Essex people wanting to go either residential (more fun socially) or non-residential (a lot cheaper!). More details will appear in the December NEWSLETTER, via District Secretaries and in *The Ringing World*.

Can YOU help?

Adrian will need plenty of helpers for the Essex Course as well as some for the one-day training course. Usually these courses have one helper to each learner. Remember you don't need to be an expert ringer to help with the Plain Bob Doubles group for example, just able to ring Plain Bob Doubles competently (or whatever method is in the group you'd like to help with). So if you can help, even if it's only for one day, please let Adrian know as soon as possible. If you know someone who would make a good tutor suggest his/her name to Adrian.

Would you like to be involved in organising the Essex course e.g. arranging towers, organising helpers etc? If so, please give Adrian a ring (0376 561183) and offer your services.

I occasionally get people asking for a speaker to talk about bells and bell-ringing. It would be useful to have a list of a few ringers from around the county who would like to do this. So if this appeals to you, or you know of someone who is willing, give me a ring and let me know (Ann Chapman 0245 358040).

No-one has yet volunteered to take over Webb Ivory. If you think you could help, please phone Ann Chapman or Liz Hull (0375 381982).

RESTORATIONS

Downham bells have been rehung on ball bearings, the frame and fittings repainted (very patriotically) and the clappers rebushed. The work commenced in early February and the bells were rededicated by the Rector of Downham on 10th June.

Matching now have their bells back after a major restoration project involving retuning the bells, replacing fittings, adapting the wheels and constructing a new frame.

David Berlow has worked tremendously hard organising fund-raising events to help raise money but they still need a further £6,000. The cost of the work has risen from the original estimate of £11,000 (in 1988) to a final total of £24,000. Much of the increase is due to the decision to obtain the frame from the foundry rather than fabricate from steel locally.

Witham have had several problems with their bells and have now tried resin bonding the frame to the tower wall to stop movement. Let's hope it works.

In future, applications for grants from the Association should be submitted on the appropriate form available from myself or District Secretaries. These should be returned to me together with appropriate quotes. This will ensure that all the information we require to consider grants is available prior to the Committee Meetings.

Around the Districts

The Car Boot Sale at Galleywood Common in June organised by Simon Poyser raised over £150. It was not very well-supported by ringers - only one couple bringing a car boot! A good way of raising money without too much effort, but more support is needed for any future sales.

The exhibition of bell-ringing at the Chelmsford and Essex Museum has had to be cancelled.

The North-East District are holding a Barn Dance at St Anne's Village Hall, Harwich Road, Colchester on Saturday 29th September. Further details and tickets are available from Brian Lord.

In June the Southern District had a successful barbecue at John and Helen Harpole's house which raised £100.

The Open Day on Spring Bank Holiday Monday organised by the South-East District raised nearly £700. Well done and thanks, Edwin, for your hard work. Thank you too all the towers who kindly opened their doors to the hordes of tower-grabbers.

The District Quarter Peal Week in June was very successful, culminating in a very enjoyable barbecue in Pat Saltmarsh's garden which raised £120 for bell restoration.

In May Canon Trevor Howard, Rural Dean of Belchamp, retired and the Northern District attempted quarters at each of the 8 towers with bells in his deanery. Seven of these were successful. A district dinner was held at Witham and was well supported. The treasure hunt at the end of July was won by Andrew and Carol Taylor and in the evening a barbecue at David & Laura Childs' home raised £100.

A barbecue held by the Witham ringers raised £50 for bell restoration.

Jean Mead has had to resign as South West District Secretary due to ill-health. Julie Burlinson (71b Church Hill, Walthamstow. Tel: 081-520 5701) has taken over this post. We all send Jean our best wishes for her recovery.

A.G.M.

The Annual General Meeting and preceding service were once again held in Chelmsford Cathedral. We were pleased to have the Provost, Dr John Moses, give the address at the service.

The usual business of adopting minutes, accounts and 1989 report was all swiftly dealt with. Both the proposed motions were adopted:

- (a) a formal set of rules for the 8-bell striking competition and
- (b) Life Vice-Presidents can only be elected by an overall majority of those present at the AGM. Names of nominees have to be given to the Committee and can only go forward to the AGM if there is a four-fifths majority in favour.

It was agreed, after much discussion, that the silver salver (originally presented to Bob Heazel) should be disposed of and the proceeds put towards the new capital fund which would be used to provide sponsorship for members attending training courses.

Bert Goddard was elected a Life Member of the Association.

Thanks to Penny Sloman and members of the Southern District for preparing lunch and South-West District members who prepared tea at Chigwell.

- - - Shhhh!!! - - -

At Mistley, a few days after a peal had been rung, the captain was checking that all was in order when he was approached by a nearby resident student, who, after stating that it was difficult to concentrate whilst ringing was in progress, said "next time you ring, can you please turn the volume down.!!"

Association Registers

Congratulations to:

Alison Beech and Stephen Nash (North Ockendon) on their marriage.
Ian Blows and Sue Wright (Woodford) on their marriage.

In Memoriam

We regret to report the deaths of the following members:

Wilf Sharp (Great Bentley)
David Salmon (Barking)

Calendar Amendments

January 1991 12 ADM - Hornchurch South-West

See *The Ringing World* for full details of all practices and meetings.

The next issue of the NEWSLETTER is planned for December. Contributions please to Mrs. Ann Chapman, 20 Mews Court, Chelmsford, Essex CM2 9PF (0245 358040) by 15th NOVEMBER 1990.

Sunday Service Ringing Survey

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This document is a follow-up to the one published and distributed at the AGM in May 1990. It concentrates on the subject of local bands and in particular, their recruitment and leadership.

Experience shows that a band needs 10 active ringers to ensure that 6 bells can be rung regularly on Sundays. In Essex we have only 30 bands with 10 or more ringers registered as Association members. There may be a few bands with a few regular ringers who have not joined the Essex Association but it is doubtful if the figure of 30 would be changed by this.

Recruitment

The traditional route to membership of a local band of ringers is as a child. In some cases this may be at the age of 8 but in other cases the weight or 'go' of the bells or stipulations on the church insurance policy may bring the age up to 12.

The expectation amongst many teachers is that the drop-out rate will be around 90% and that from the remaining 10% will emerge the quality ringers and leaders of the ringing exercise in future years. From the 90% there are signs that a number who gave up in haste return to ringing in later life.

This traditional approach to recruitment should be set against the changes in our way of life which have so characterised the past 20 years:

- a) the decline both in church-going and of respect for the Church of England
- b) the movement of smaller parishes into group ministries where Sunday church services are as regular and frequent as rural bus services.
- c) the proliferation of a whole range of sports, activities and pastimes which now compete for the time and interest of young people
- d) the decline in values, particularly that of loyalty

A few ringers have been taught as adults but have probably not been taken too seriously as far as their ringing potential is concerned. Nevertheless we have a past Association Secretary and a current District Master who fall into this category. Those who know either of these individuals do not think any the less of them for starting to ring a little later in life.

There must be ringers who are gritting their teeth and hoping that once again there will be a steady supply of keen and able youngsters to the ringing chamber. There are young ringers around but not enough. An exception to this situation is where established ringers teach their own children or have them taught by other competent ringers. For some families this is a natural thing to do, for others it is not, so I am not proposing a 'teach your child to ring' campaign.

There must be towers where the traditional situation holds good and the band flourishes. I would like to know more about towers of this type and the factors which point to their success. On the other hand there are towers where the whole set-up is light-years away from what a youngster would expect to find if he or she took up karate, competitive swimming, gymnastics or many other things that one could think of. Many of these activities are relatively new and use modern training techniques. Ringing is not new and its teaching techniques have hardly changed at all.

There is a trap into which we can fall by comparing ringing with these many other activities, namely that these are leisure activities which can be taken

up and ultimately set down at will. There is a well-known car sticker which reminds us that "a dog is for life". Perhaps we should remind people that ringing is for life (and a pleasant one at that).

Leadership

Before I turn to what I see as an alternative scenario, I will dwell on the subject of leadership. We live in an age where individuals in a very wide variety of occupations receive training in management and leadership skills. Many ringers will have received such training yet there remains a chronic shortage of tower captains (let alone good tower captains). The best ringers, like parsons and manure, should be spread as thinly across the ground as is possible. Frank Lufkin can give a few words of advice on this subject if you care to ask him.

There have been attempts to establish local bands without properly addressing the leadership problem. There is usually a vague hope that someone will emerge. There is a greater chance that a large amount of effort by a number of well-meaning people will have been wasted.

I have no simple solution but it is nevertheless a subject that must remain high on our agenda.

An Alternative

I present an alternative scenario, based purely on my own experience. We at Waltham Abbey have a lively and active congregation but we have not had a supply of young recruits to the tower for at least 20 years, the only exceptions being relatives of existing ringers not all of whom have remained. In the past few years we have had a trickle of adult learners. None have been under 40 and so far none have stopped ringing; our only losses being a husband and wife who have returned to Northern Ireland. Progress is slow, sometimes painfully so but the commitment is there both to learning and in terms of attendance (we still ring twice on Sundays). One cannot expect such individuals to give as much of their spare time to attending other practices and Association events as one might of a younger person but with patience and perseverance one can expect the majority of people to become competent in the standard methods on whatever the number of bells one normally rings (in our case, 8).

In today's society, with improved levels of health and dietary care, people continue to lead fully active lives well into what in earlier generations would be have been their dotage (ask any WAG this question). If you teach someone at 40, you could get 40 years ringing out of them. Is this such a bad deal ?

We need to know what makes a tower 'tick' and what are the long-term plans to keep it that way. A few more examples would be most welcome.

Don Cobb
August 1990