

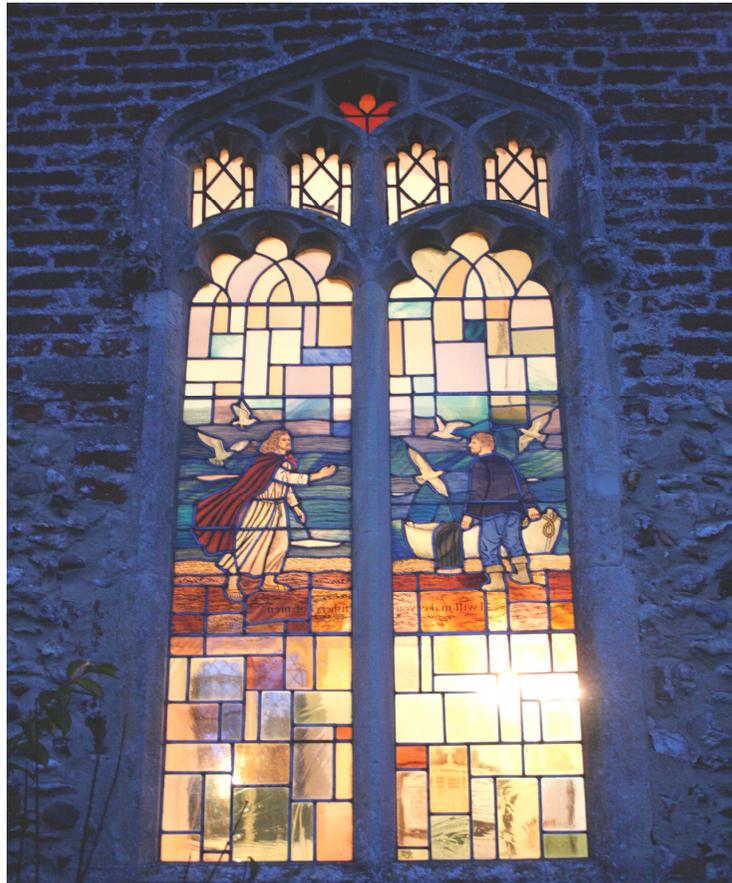


Magazine of the Suffolk Guild of Ringers

Issue 4

Spring 2011

Awl a'huld



A south window, St Mary's, Sweffling. See back page.
Photographs of Sweffling church by Giles Croucher

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From the Editorial Team

Welcome to another issue of the Suffolk Guild magazine. And a belated Happy New Year. The Sally and Bob cartoon in the last edition (can we ring Jingle Bells on Christmas morning?) prompted a response from Sue Walland telling us of husband Mark's ringing of carols in previous years at St Mary's, Bungay, using the chiming apparatus. See lower down the page for the detail he sent and a picture of the proceedings this Christmas just passed.

In this issue we break with tradition (if you can form a tradition over only three issues) and in place of the chairman's piece we are delighted to have a contribution from the Ringing Master about young ringers and ringing. This fits very well with other pieces that we have on young ringers towards the back of the magazine.

Thank you to our contributors and a plea to you all: please keep sending things to us. If we are in the fortunate position of having more than we can fit in we will carry items forward to the next edition. And especially, like the ringing of Christmas tunes, if something you see in the magazine jogs a memory or makes some kind of link please let us know and we will include an item if we can. These threads that run from issue to issue are part of what magazines do best.

Please send your contributions by e-mail to magazine@suffolkbells.org.uk or as written copy to Sue Freeman at High Meadow, Martens Lane, Polstead. CO6 5AG
Alan Stanley, Sue Freeman and Richard Gates



Mark Walland in action

Carols at St Mary's Bungay

I use the music from a book called 'Music for Handbells and Church Bells' by A. J. Crabtree. I have been ringing carols and Christmas tunes on the Bungay bells for at least 10 years, maybe more, and it is becoming a tradition. This year I/We (Sue helps on occasions) played most of the well known carols in the book plus Rudolf and of course Jingle Bells. We don't have an audience as such but passers-by tend to pause until the end of the tune being played. M.W.



From the Ringing Master

'The children don't have anything to do.'

How often do we hear that uttered when the subject of unruly youths and ASBOs is brought up? The truth is that they are probably a matter of minutes from a ring of bells and even an active band of ringers, so why aren't they up there developing in a craft that offers a lifetime of friendship and activity?

One answer is of course that the above phrase trotted out so regularly is just an excuse. It's not that they have nothing to do but rather nothing they can be bothered to do.

Another is that bellringing has a difficult image problem to overcome. Rightly or wrongly, we're inextricably linked to the church, a hugely uncool and even unpopular symbol of the 'old' British society.

And finally, will these kids and their families actually know about what is on offer just down the road?

We can't really do an awful lot about the first point, but the last two we can do plenty and can be summed up in three words – good public relations. Here in Suffolk we are lucky to have the Vestey Ring, a highly visible advert that can attract the attention and presence of kids who wouldn't be seen dead near a church. Perhaps in order to attract youngsters into the belfry and then possibly into the church we need to first distance ourselves from the church?

Once we have a youngster then retention can be equally hard. As a young ringer I thrived on trying to become better than those around me, especially those of my age and even more particularly my brother! There's absolutely nothing wrong with that though and it's something I feel we ought to be encouraging amongst our youngsters today. After all we have a healthy number of youngsters in our membership and they seem to be thriving on pushing each other on.

Let's help them by pushing ourselves! Richard.



Suffolk Guild AGM to be held on Sat. 30th April at Henley

2.30-3.30 "Bellframes - Replace or Repair" Centre. Debate Chaired by Philip Gorrod, Guild Chairman. Speakers, Mark Regan of Worcester and Shawn Kholucy Church Architect. An exploration of the issues around existing bell frames in restoration projects. Henley Community Centre

3.00-4.00 Open ringing at St Peter's church. The Mini Ring will be available.

4.00 Service

4.45 Tea at Henley Community Centre

6.15 AGM

Following the AGM: Evening ringing until 9.00

Parking at Henley church is extremely limited. Please park at the Community Centre which is a short walk from the church.

Suggested pub – "Cross Keys", Henley about ½ mile to the north.

The North East - A first

We believe that a quarter peal of spliced surprise major (the standard eight) rung at Pakefield on Saturday 14th August 2010 was probably the first ever by a resident N.E. band.

- | | | | |
|---|----------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| 1 | Jason Busby (Halesworth) | 5 | Philip Moyse (Reydon) |
| 2 | Tom Brittain (Reydon) | 6 | Richard Rapior (Aldeburgh) |
| 3 | Barry Pickup (Beccles) | 7 | Maggie Ross (Halesworth) |
| 4 | Trevor Hughes (Stradbroke) | 8 | Philip Gorrod (C) (Halesworth) |

First of spliced surprise for the ringers of 4 and 5.

Don Price

The Guild Social

The Guild social event, held in November, was hosted by the North East District. There was ringing in the afternoon at Bungay, Barsham, Beccles and Ringsfield, followed by the really social part of the day at Ringsfield Village Hall. This was a quiz, interrupted half way through by a delicious meal. The atmosphere became very competitive as many of the teams had near-identical scores. The questions were excellently thought out. The first question in the 'Bells and Ringing' round was, 'Who wrote The Hunchback of Notre Dame?' That should give a flavour of the sort of quiz it was: full of the unexpected. After a very close run thing, the winners, by only half a point, were a team from the SW District.

It was a chilly and foggy night, but attendance was good and everyone enjoyed themselves hugely. The fact that the bar ran out of beer is a measure of the success of the evening. Well done Julie and her team for organising the whole thing.

News from the North West District A tower captain steps down

The evening of February 8th was an evening of mixed emotions for the ringers at St Edmundsbury Cathedral. It was the occasion of our tower AGM and we were very pleased to meet our new Dean the Very Reverend Frances Ward as Chair for her first tower meeting. For our tower captain Ian Holland however, it was his last AGM as the captain at the helm. Together with his wife Marion, they have held the posts of Tower Captain, Treasurer and Secretary for more years than he confesses to remember. He was certainly in post in 1998 as Ringing Master and Secretary when I came to Bury after a few years away from ringing.



News from the North West District (cont.)

It was a decision tinged with sadness that Ian took to step down earlier last year to enable him to spend more time with Marion, whose health has been gradually deteriorating over the past two years, and to concentrate on the augmentation project that was formally launched in October 2010.

During his term of office, the standard of ringing at the Cathedral has improved greatly, and active recruitment of potential ringers and the influx of two experienced ringers in the last two years have swelled the numbers for service ringing considerably. Under Ian's leadership, competent ringers have been encouraged to attempt more surprise methods on eight bells and standard methods on the ten. Stedman Caters for Sunday Service ringing would not have been possible 18 months ago.

There have been many times I am sure when he despaired of the less experienced amongst us, who have been slower than he would have liked to get things right. Over the years though we have learnt that for Ian to comment that a piece of ringing was "almost acceptable", what he really meant was "Well done" or "A good effort". A typical straight talking Yorkshire man with an economy of words, it takes a while to get used to him. Once you have though, you discover that deep inside is a man who is of superior talent and an unsurpassed dedication to helping one achieve the best that one can.

As a thank you Ian and Marion were presented with some Garden Centre Gift vouchers and a card signed by all the ringers. They are pictured opposite with the members of the tower.

Mandy Shedden

North West Christmas Social

The North West District Christmas social took place at Rougham on the 11th of December. 30 ringers were present and enjoyed nearly two hours of ringing which ranged from call changes to Norwich. Following this there was a buffet lunch and a hot drink, which was the result of everyone bringing a plate of food to share. Lunch was followed by a short meeting.

We look forward to a full programme of ringing for the coming year.

Maurice Rose



News From the South West District - Monks Eleigh

Monks Eleigh has a beautiful church that overlooks the village green and a tributary of the river Brett.

The tower is open to the church and has six bells; only the organ standing at the west end is in the way of a clear view of the chancel. The ringing space is one floor up and at long last it has a new floor that has got rid of the somewhat alarming hole that ringers were perched round in the past. There is an external clock bell but this is not connected to the ringing bells.

The bells are moderately heavy but their real disadvantage is that they are in old bearings and consequently quite hard work. However for campanologists the tower has two bells of interest. The fifth which is about 13 cwt was cast either by Peter de Weston who was working between 1336 and 1347 or by William Revel whose dates are 1350 to 1360 thus making this bell one of the oldest in Suffolk. The other pre reformation bell of interest is the fourth. From the marking this appears to have been cast at Bury St Edmunds some time in the fifteenth century.

The tower had not had a regular band for some time until about four years ago when a little local advertising brought together a group of enthusiasts who, with some outside help and support from a long time village ringer, started to learn from scratch.

Monks Eleigh now has a competent call-change band who ring for services and weddings and, having mastered plain hunting, are now taking up the challenge of bob doubles and other simple methods.

The positive aspect of this story, for towers that no longer speak and seem to be forgotten, is that they can be rejuvenated with a little bit of enthusiasm from the locals and help from guild members who can teach the basic skills.

Richard Gates

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South East District News

Despite the fairly severe winter weather towers have been quite active in the District. There are new beginners at Bredfield (excellent six!) whilst Debenham has become a real focal point for the Loes Deanery and beyond at their Tuesday practices. Well done Jenny (and family) for spearheading that.

The Pettistree-Hollesley axis has a really good repertoire in Surprise Minor and Major methods with quarters regularly rung: Belfast S. Major recently a very good achievement. Offton has also scored quarters now in all stan-

dard eight S. Major methods and Stedman Triples, no mean effort that.

At St Mary le Tower there is ten and twelve bell ringing for Sunday services plus any 'civic' commitments and on practice nights up to S. Maximus and Stedman Cinques. Recently a 'try something new' resulted in a quarter of Superlative No2 S. Royal.

Finally to the other District towers, 'keep going' and try to visit bells not regularly heard. Congratulations to Robert Beavis on his first peal as conductor (Bob Major) in Peal Week.

Reuters

Ringling Plain Bob doubles

Part two. Ringling the method on an inside bell

Your first attempt at this method inside will usually be with an experienced ringer standing behind you to keep you on the straight and narrow, as they say. You will no doubt have learned 'the blue line' and in addition heard people talk about 'counting your places, the order of work, the circle of work, dodging, making four blows behind, before (or course) bells and after bells', and generally firing helpful comments at you, to the point where you tend to get overloaded with information and probably confused by it all. My experience with learners has shown that you have to be very careful to explain the meaning of these terms, because they may not admit that they do not understand what you are talking about. If you can plain hunt successfully, and have had a go at dodging with one bell as explained in part one, then you have already experienced much of the above, and ringling an inside bell to a plain course of the method will be a straightforward and relatively painless progression. I will explain what is meant by the majority of the terms described.

The Blue line – this is the path of each of the working bells (2, 3, 4 and 5) throughout the plain course. If you look at any ringling diagram, you will find a blue line marked on it, with usually another red line for the treble. If we look at the second bell, you will see that this bell starts by leading two blows, hunts up to the back (as in plain hunt) makes two blows at the back, and then, instead of running straight down to the front (as in plain hunt) when it gets to thirds place, it goes back to fourths place (3/4 down dodge) and then goes down to the front, where it leads again. It then goes up to the back, and here makes **four blows behind** before going down to lead once again. After leading it moves out to the back

Continued on next page

Plain Bob doubles

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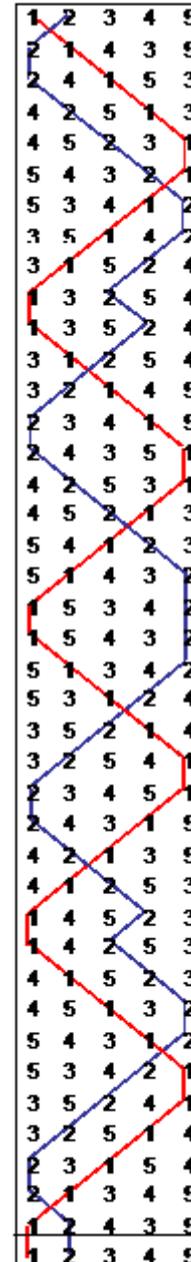
again, but on the way, when it reaches fourths place, it goes back and makes one blow in thirds ($3/4$ up dodge) before continuing on to the back. After making two blows at the back, it goes straight down to lead, and after leading lays two blows in seconds behind the treble as it leads and at the second blow in seconds the bells run into rounds and it is the end of the plain course. At this point, if the conductor decides to ring another plain course, you will immediately start by leading again, and you will notice that in all you have led two blows, made two blows in seconds and then led two blows again. This is what is known as laying to the treble.

The circle (or order) of work – this is sometimes described as a ‘circle’ because if you draw a circle, and put an arrow indicating a clockwise direction, you can write around the circle the work as described above, which is ‘dodge $3/4$ down, four blows behind, dodge $3/4$ up, lay to treble. This is the work of the second. The other bells each start at a different place but follow round in the **same** direction, so wherever you start, you always go clockwise. If you are ringing one of the other bells which starts by laying to the treble at the end of the first lead, your next work would be dodge $3/4$ down and so on.

Course and after bells – in plain bob doubles the bells ‘course’ in the order 2453. This simply means that they come down to lead in that order, and in ringing plain hunt on the second, you will always lead after the third (your course bell) and the fourth will lead after you (your after bell) This also applies to bob doubles, and on the second you will therefore lead after the third, and before the fourth, in the plain course. If you get lost or miss your down dodge, you can wait for the third to lead and then lead after it, thereby putting you back where you should be again.

I recommend that you obtain some squared paper and write out a plain course, putting the treble down first, then the second, and then the other bells until you have completed the four leads of the plain course. Put a line through the treble and second bells paths. As in plain hunt, the even bells start by going in, and the odd bells out. The fifth starts by making one extra blow behind and then going in. Try to note where you pass the treble and you will see that you always do this in the same place relative to each separate dodge etc., and this will help you when you have to apply all this to the ropes.

Winston Girling



Crossword by Richard Gates

Clues across

1 Picture houses for a moving art form (7)

5 Pull her majesty to stand over part of a fort (5)

8 Prime number for twins (3)

9 Partly left to rot or may be to spin round (5)

10 Clue left by a foot in capital letters (5)

11 Relation from Mafeking? (3)

12 The kind of window to wrap round your body (4)

14 Good health for a water supply system (4)

15 Strange and uneven (3)

17 I feel R another way round for easing a siege (6)

19 Suffolk ales lead the monasteries (6)

21 Palm off a small pocket (3)

23 Halt a sentence with a full one (4)

25 If a muddled mean is the finish so be it (4)

29 A hundred up to gain this vessel (3)

31 Fear of mixed up adder (5)

32 Brian O'Death hides a positive pole (5)

33 No head needed to reel in this fish (3)

34 Major actors seen in the night sky (5)

35 Exam and if Y can give evidence (7)

Clues down

1 Carries on horse drawn vehicles (5)

2 Musically a brief record (5)

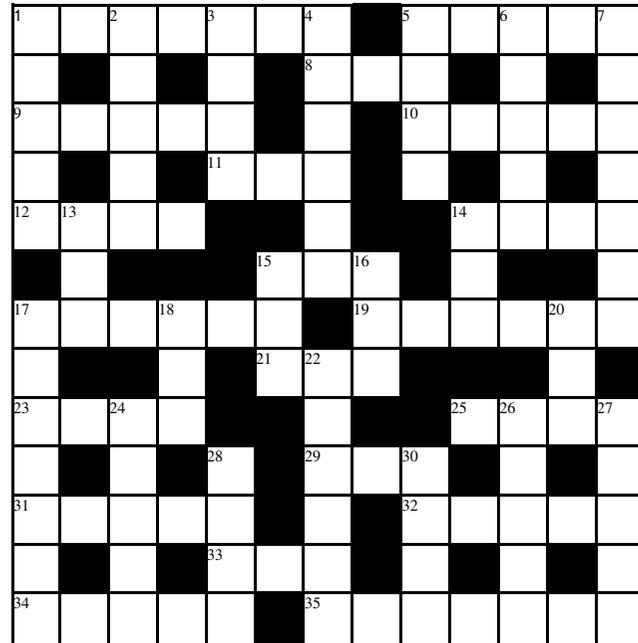
3 A Venetian square is a place for old German money (4)

4 Out of your mind from a biblical punishment (6)

5 Many a spot is high up in reverse (4)

6 Sounds like a hand signal will forgo a right (5)

7 It sounds to be the cause of Tweedledum and Tweedledee's quarrel (7)



13 Hail, have topless welcome (3)

14 Spider's home on a computer (3)

15 Headless toff is not switched on (3)

16 Make a slight sudden strike for a flat fish (3)

17 Capitally Royal Engineers have edges where one lives (7)

18 The little devil comes from the Limpopo river (3)

20 Sounds like a cuppa that leads to the green (3)

22 Secret magic from Officer Commanding devoted group (6)

24 Classical musical work (5)

26 New Zealand native from Alabama or Iowa (5)

27 The answer from sane Ed your much wanted friend (5)

28 From North to South to make poems from a node (4)

30 Go through it by indicating that you don't know (4)

Campsea Ashe Bells

Those of you who have rung on the original four bells at Campsea Ashe will know that they were an “interesting” ring! They had been silent for most of the 20th century, before basic repairs were made in time to ring them for the Millennium. But they were never in tune and their sound quality was poor. Apart from these drawbacks, they were hard work and had the charming habit of “going up wrong!” The idea of restoring them arose when a quarter peal attempt was cut short by a weight falling from the clapper of the second bell. Somewhat alarming, but no damage was done.

So the Campsea Ashe Bells Restoration Project was launched in September 2007. The decision was made to leave the tenor in the original frame as a service bell and incorporate the treble, second and third as the four, five and tenor of the new ring. We would then need to cast three lighter bells as the treble, second and third of the new ring in a frame beneath the original one.

Fund raising activities began in the autumn of 2007. These included sponsored quarter peals, tracing family ancestry, the Talents Challenge (where a collection of people were given £20 to start a fundraising event or scheme), three choral concerts from scratch, other concerts by visiting musicians, two ringing festivals and two sponsored 10k runs in Woodbridge and Framlingham. Numerous grants were applied for and various well-known people with Suffolk connections were approached for financial support. There were many generous individual donors, and donations from towers and ringers across Suffolk. We were fortunate to receive a large sum from the Heritage Lottery Fund for our project, also for developing the Church as a heritage centre for the community as well as a place of worship. So the funds climbed. Our three new bells were individually sponsored, the treble by the people of Campsea Ashe and the second and third by family donations.

At the beginning of 2010 the gallery was built. We think it's a superb asset to the church as well as enabling the ringing and ringers to be seen by the congregation.

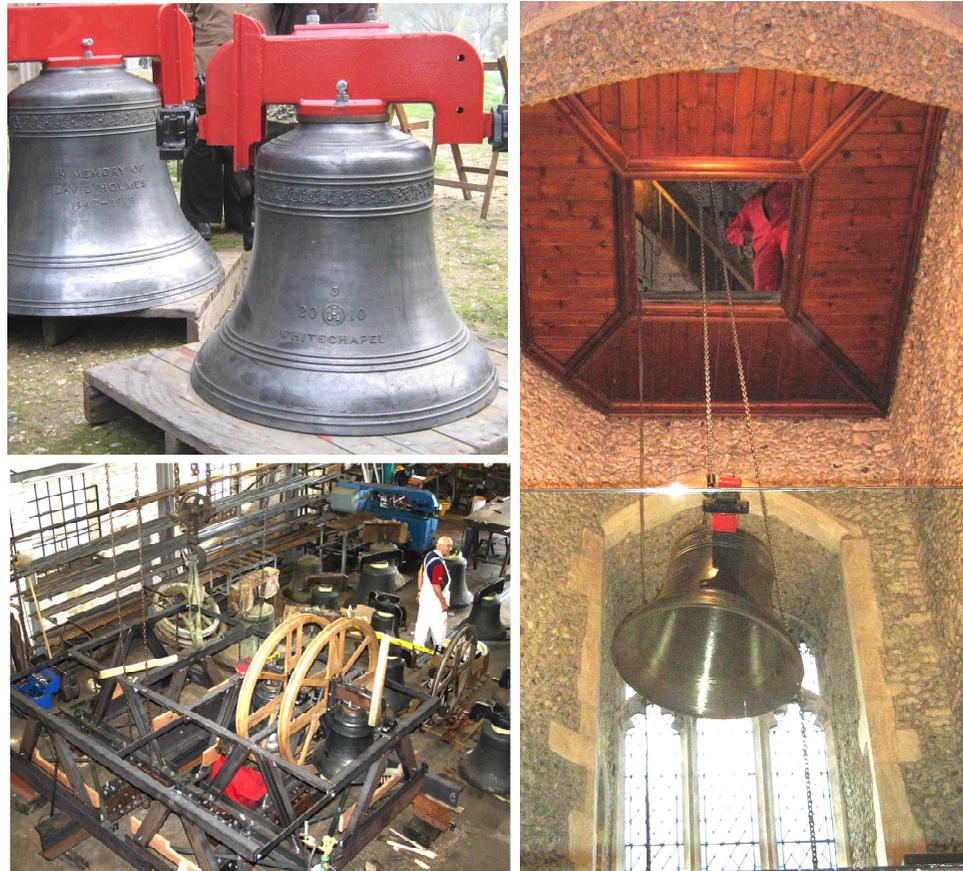
We chose Nicholson Engineering of Bridport to do the bells work. The three old bells were removed in April 2010, the three new bells having been cast in March at Whitechapel. I imagine most of you know that those three new bells and our old third were stolen from Bridport in September. It was an unbelievable shock, but within a short time insurance was paid and four new bells were cast in November, again at Whitechapel.

The bells were hung by Nicholsons, along with volunteer helpers, and rung for the first time on Friday 10th December. We are thrilled with them. We practise each Saturday from 9-10:30am. Do join us one Saturday!

We are extremely grateful to the members of the Guild who have supported us. You have been generous with your grant – paid for through your Guild subscriptions – and many individuals have encouraged and supported us. We greatly appreciate this. Glenys Fear

Bell details

Bell	Dia	Weight	Note	Date	Founder
Treble	23 11/16"	2-3-13	F#	2010	Whitechapel Bellfoundry
Second	25 1/8"	3-0-24	E	2010	Whitechapel Bellfoundry
Third	26 1/2"	3-2-22	D	2010	Whitechapel Bellfoundry
Fourth	27 1/8"	3-2-16	C#	1615	John Brend II, Norwich
Fifth	29 7/8"	4-1-19	B	1714	Thomas Gardiner, Sudbury
Tenor	33 7/16"	6-2-8	A	2010	Whitechapel Bellfoundry
Old tenor	36"	8cwt	G#	1601	Richard Bowler, Colchester



Clockwise from top left: Holmes' & Archer dedicated bells; Hoisting the David Holmes dedicated bell; Pre-assembly of the frame

Young Ringer's training day

As I approached Bardwell church, all was silent. However, as I walked closer I could hear a faint chiming, growing louder as I neared the door. Was it a bird? Was it a plane? No, it was the Vestey Ring, (wo)manned by Maggie and Brian, teaching some of the 14 young learners how to handle the newly acquired bells. Although a new concept, call changes and courses of plain hunt were rung, after the technique was perfected. Behind us, t-shirts were being laid out; plain black with the guild logo and the text 'Suffolk Young Ringers' on the breast. (T-shirts are still available – contact Ruth Suggett)

Entertaining as mini-ringing was, there was a more pressing matter: lunch. What seemed like something that would satisfy the biblical 5000 was consumed by learners and helpers, intertwined with socialising and filling in the quiz sheets produced by Mandy and Craig. Marking the quizzes followed with the help of Becky going into teacher mode, and, after the stairs were counted several times, the winners were

announced. Congratulations must go to Sophie and Ambrin, but well done to everyone who took part.

The tower had been silent all day, and as I climbed the 38 steps (definitely 38) I discovered why: the clappers had been tied, and the bells were being rung on the Simulator. This allows you to ring with the clappers tied so you can make as much noise as you want, at any hour. (More information and details of simulators in towers can be found on the Suffolk Guild website.) Everything from handling practice to plain hunt on 7 was rung, and there was a special session of ringing up and down.

The afternoon finished off with a touch of St Clement's CB Minor rung by the helpers, before lowering the bells, taking off the clapper ties and dismantling the mini-ring. A good day's ringing was had by all, and thanks must be extended to Ruth Suggett for organising, and the numerous teachers and other ringers for their help.

Alex Tatlow

Advice for children learning to ring

The following piece came to us from Ralph Earey, Tower Captain at All Saints' Sproughton written by a young ringer there.

Hello I'm Phoebe Ruff, I am 10 years old and I am a ringer at All Saints' Church Sproughton. Here I am writing you a short guide to easy ringing.

Never touch the ropes until you know what you're doing!

You have to be sure you want to take up ringing because it can be a bit daunting at first.

You always have to be sensible because a silly ringer is a bad ringer and you do not want to be kicked out of a tower.

Do not get worried about getting pulled up by the rope. That does hardly ever happen, only if you break the stay and hold on which is very unlikely.

The first thing you will learn is how to ring back stroke which is when the bell is with the open end of the bell facing upwards. Your helper/tower captain will pull hand

Advice for children learning to ring (cont.)

stroke then you will hold the tail end (the end of the rope) and it will go up in the air and all you have to do is pull it down again and your helper will catch the sally (the fluffy bit) before again pulling it and up go your hands. This back stroke is the simple part of ringing. When you have mastered the back stroke you will start to learn the hand stroke which is what your helper was doing when you rang the back stroke. This is a bit harder than the back stroke and might take longer to learn. What you have to do is when the bell is still you hold on to the sally and pull and the bell will slip off the slider and come over the balance which is what holds the bell still. This will of course make the rope ascend so you have to let go pretty much as soon as you pull then your helper will take the back stroke and then as the sally comes down you must catch it and then pull the rope down once more as it goes up to back stroke. Before you learn how to ring both together you might be given a pretend tail end that you can use at hand stroke to get used to ringing with another piece of rope in your hand. Now this is the tricky bit that can take up to 2 or 3 months to learn: this is both strokes together. This could get you to be a bit worried but all you need to do is to feel confident about it and just go for it. So that is my simple guide to easy ringing.

Other Things That You Would Need To Know About Ringing Church Bells

The **Tower Captain** has many jobs about the tower such as calling call changes, rounds and teaching a new learner. The tower captain also needs to organise all the special things happening and tell people about them such as Midnight mass, New year ringing and also the Sunday services. Your tower captain will have had lots of experience so feel free to ask them anything.

Rounds are a simple way of ringing and will be the first thing you will learn. All you have to do is follow the bell in front of you. This will make the order 123456, 123456 again and again until your tower captain tells you to stop or change what you are ringing.

Call Changes are when the order of the bells change and they are a little tricky to learn and to explain. So I will try and explain in the simplest way possible. You will start ringing rounds as you always do when you are ringing something. Then the Tower Captain or leader will say something like 2 to 3. On the next sally stroke the two will follow the three and the three can no longer follow the 2 so shall follow the treble (the lightest bell) making the order 132456 rather than 123456. Then the tower captain will call out lots of other numbers changing around lots of other bells until it changes back to rounds. Sometimes call changes can be a little tricky so ask your tower captain if you have any questions.

Phoebe Ruff



High Maintenance - Bell Ropes

Bell ropes, especially now it takes so long to get new ones, benefit from being looked after. The first place to start here is not with the rope, but with the pulleys. Keep a close eye on them, making sure they run freely and if you have those spoked plastic ones, that they are replaced before they wear through and the spokes cut your ropes to shreds.

Adjusting the rope on the wheel so a fresh bit goes through the garter hole is well worth the effort of climbing those stairs or ladders; not only will the fibres live a little longer, but moving the rope up and down a few inches means the sally and tail end get used in slightly different places too.

When the top end gets worn and the fibres short, there is usually plenty of good rope wound around the wheel spokes. A long splice, from just below the worn patch, using the good end of the top gets the worn bit going around the spokes instead and ensures you get your money's worth.

Tail ends get worn too; those hoary old ringers' hands, knots and other adjustments and hitting the floor all take their toll. New tail ends can be purchased and with a short splice just below the sally, give you another few years' use. I have renewed the tail end on the same rope two or three times.

Finally, if you have good sallies but you have used up the top end, get some Hardy Hemp and with a short splice just above the sally you get yet more years out of your ropes for only a little investment. The Guild holds a stock of Hardy Hemp.

To see a really good explanation of how to do both short and long splices, Pam Copson's Carry On book (blue one) is worth getting. Otherwise, ask one of your friendly BAC team to show you.

Jonathan Stevens Guild Technical Advisor.



A short splice

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How safe is your ringing chamber?

Now I know that health and safety is a nuisance to many and I am no expert but I can see the odd danger occurring in a ringing room.

Many years ago when I was a member of the Peterborough Guild someone came up with the idea of a Tidy Towers competition; this was not very popular and only lasted maybe two years. I guess most tower captains didn't like the thought of their towers being inspected and judgement made. However the theory that a tidy ringing room is a safer one is a good one. For example, one ringing room I rang in regularly had wrought iron flower stands in it. One day a rope got caught under a loop and up in the air it went, swinging around the tower just at head height. Luckily everyone set their bells and got on the floor. Needless to say they were removed from the tower.

Another tower had a large window in the West end of the church above the ringing room on the ground floor. When the tenor rope broke below the sally, the sally swept the windowsill which was covered with broken glass from the window having been broken, replaced and the builders not seeing fit to remove the broken glass. Fortunately no

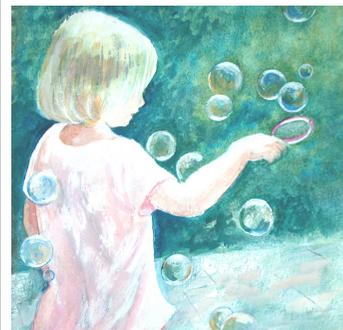
one was injured on this occasion!

On another outing the little used belfry had folding stacking chairs in it. Most of them were removed but some remained. Half way through a piece of ringing a rope caught the leg of one chair and the remaining ones shot across the tower!

My most recent incident on tour was again a belfry full of chairs. They were removed to the church and the two benches moved within the tower. This left a loop on the bench exposed and although people stood in front of it someone hooked the bench. It was lifted in the air and thrown towards the 10 year old on the treble. Her dad on the tenor tried to protect her and chaos ensued. No harm was done other than making a rather nervous 10 year old who thankfully did continue to ring.

This reminded another ringer of a tower where the local said, "Keep the door shut." Someone knew better and rang with it open, a rope caught the latch and lifted the large door off its hinges and it crashed across the tower. I don't know how they explained that to him.

Do check your towers for these unexpected hazards before someone gets hurt. Sally Munnings



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St Mary's Sweffling

Sitting lightly on its hill St Mary's Sweffling looks gently over the villagers' cottages. With one's back to the porch facing south, the view above the chimneys to the fields and woods beyond is always interesting; a view that many thousands have enjoyed over the centuries that St Mary's has been at the centre of village life.

Inside, you can find a bit more about that life, in the history room, under the ringing floor. Many visitors come to see if there is a picture of "Grandad" and to enjoy searching through the old records.

Further up the tower, the sound room is plastered inside, has a cupboard in the wall and a door to the nave roof. Once that door was probably the entrance to this room, before the thatched roof was replaced with slate. With a southerly window bringing in a little light, one wonders if this was once lived in, like the Norman Room at Wissett.

In the belfry there are six bells, re-hung in a generous oak frame by Day of Eye in 1888; some still with their original stays. The plain bearings are showing signs of wear now; in due course something will have to be done. For many years the bells couldn't be rung due to tower worries,

but in the early seventies a concrete ring-beam was cast at roof level tying the tower together and allowing the bells to sound again.

Back in the nave, there is a chamber organ that still, despite its size, manages to fill the church with sound, the Ten Commandments and under pew heating. We have no need to freeze here on a Sunday. On the south side there is a stained glass window showing a local fisherman being called by Jesus; a reminder that we are all called, not just Simon and his friends. It is in memory of Richard Stevens who learned to ring here when ringing restarted after the tower repairs.

Overall, this is a light, welcoming and much loved church. Sadly, it is kept locked but the key is easily obtained. Visitors are encouraged, to the extent a detached small room has recently been built, offering comfort (!) to all.
Jonathan Stevens.

