



# Magazine of the Suffolk Guild of Ringers

Issue 22

Spring 2017

Awl a'huld



Spring at Saints Peter and Paul, Bardwell. See back page.

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## From the Editors

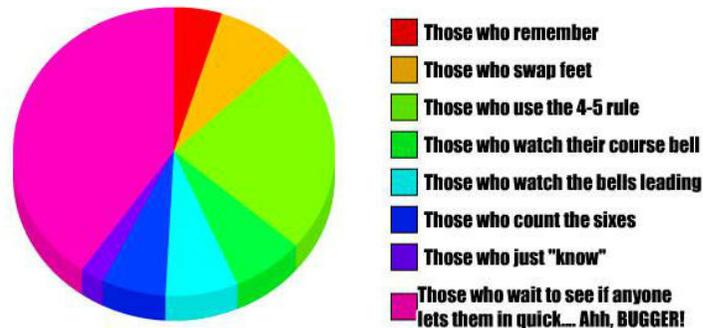
**W**e hope you will find something to interest you in this spring issue of your magazine. Many thanks, as always, to all those people who have put pen to paper, or at any rate, fingers to keyboard, to send us material. We must particularly thank two non-ringers (although one of them rings birds) for the material on the centre pages about the swifts at All Saints, Worlington.

A theme of this issue seems to be restoration and augmentation. Laxfield, Cretingham and Little Cornard are all working hard to raise funds. We wish them well in their efforts. 2018 will see restored rings ready to commemorate the end of World War I.

Contributions, with lots of photographs please, for the summer issue by the end of June to [magazine@suffolkbells.org.uk](mailto:magazine@suffolkbells.org.uk) or by post to Sue Freeman, High Meadow, Martens Lane, Polstead, Colchester CO6 5AG.  
Sue Freeman and Richard Gates

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# Stedman - Quick or Slow?



Contributed by Jonathan Williamson

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## From the Chairman

It has come round to that time of year again when, at last, the afternoons are drawing out and we seem to have early evening daylight again. And as we approach Easter we approach another Guild AGM. More of that later in the piece.

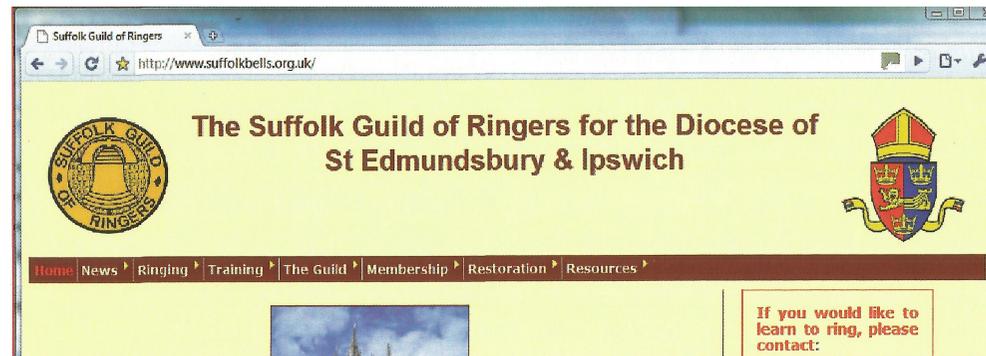
The GMC meeting held in February heard about the progress being made on restoration and maintenance projects, always good news this, even if there are sometimes challenges. The GMC also considered some potential changes to the Guild rules. Potential changes because actually making changes can only be done with a two thirds supporting majority at an AGM. The changes are about improving governance and clarity and full details with the rationale and text will be made available separately and in plenty of time before the AGM. (You may already have seen this). The purpose of mentioning them here is to keep you abreast of the discussions at the GMC and also to urge you to put the AGM date, 22<sup>nd</sup> April in your diary. There is a good selection of ringing on offer and you will find full details of the AGM on page 12 of this magazine.

The subject of District meetings also came up and there were voices of concern that these were not always as well attended as they might be. Guild funding is available to support meeting costs and wider use of this may help bolster attendance. But we can all make an effort. We want to be a modern inclusive organisation whose members feel included and involved. There will always be members in every organisation for whom the activity will be their only involvement but all organisations need steering and support in a variety of ways to keep them going. Please think about a greater personal involvement.



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Information about the Guild and its activities can be found on the website.



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## North West District Raising and Lowering Morning

It was discussed at Walsham Le Willows practice one Friday night that it would be useful to hold a practice dedicated to raising and lowering bells, as several members of the band had expressed an interest.



L - R Mark, John, Ruth, Sarah, Suzanne, Clive, Jackie, Ollie and Denise, kneeling in front Richard. Andy also helped but he had to go before the photo was taken.

It was decided that it would be best to hold this at the light six at Hunston for two specific reasons: 1) they are a ground floor ring and 2) the remoteness of the church meant we could have a long practice without disturbing anybody!

Although there is no electricity in the church, eleven ringers arrived armed with flasks and biscuits and settled in for a two hour session on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> February.

We had enough helpers for one on one tutoring, and had several sessions of getting bells up and

then down again, with the students becoming more confident each time.

It was also a good opportunity for those who needed practice at raising and lowering in peal. We had several attempts getting better each time.

Everyone felt they had learned something from the session and we hope to hold another training morning soon.

We finished our visit to Hunston with chips from the local shop.

Ruth Young

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## South West District

At the Annual District Meeting in November the committee was delighted to welcome three new officers. Pam Ebsworth has come forward as secretary and Tony Read as treasurer. A post that has sometimes been used in the past was reinstated and Derek Rose, who remains ringing master, now has a deputy. Paul Ebsworth has taken on this job so that Derek can sometimes have a rest!

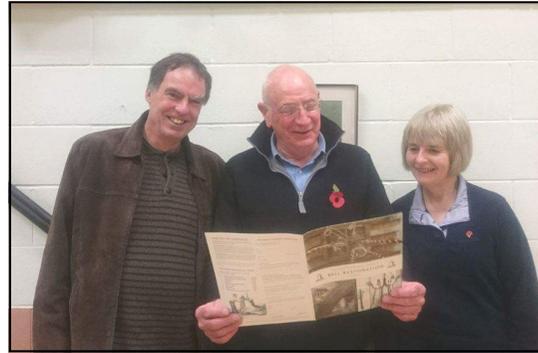
The two district practices held so far this year, at Lavenham in January and Hadleigh in February, were very well attended and most enjoyable events.

The district is to hold an Open Towers Day on August Bank Holiday Monday. See page 13 for more information and look out for the list of towers open nearer the time.

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## From the North East District

**A**t the North East Annual District Meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> November there was all change in the District Committee structure. The District welcomes Mike Cowling as Chairman and Kate Gill as Secretary who will work alongside Philip Gorrod as District Ringing Master. They are pictured here with the Laxfield Bell Appeal Brochure as the fundraising campaign to re-hang and augment these bells gets under way.



Fiona Shuttle is spearheading the Laxfield campaign. She writes:

### All Saints, Laxfield – Bell Restoration Appeal

**O**ur ambitious project includes the installation of a new cast iron bell frame that will be installed in the space below the existing medieval oak frame which will be left in place and treated to preserve it for historical interest. It will also hold the existing fifth bell, cast in about 1599 which will remain in its current position as the clock bell, and the third of about 1490 as a service bell. We are also taking the opportunity to augment to eight bells complete with new fixtures and fittings, simulator and a newly decorated and heated ringing chamber.

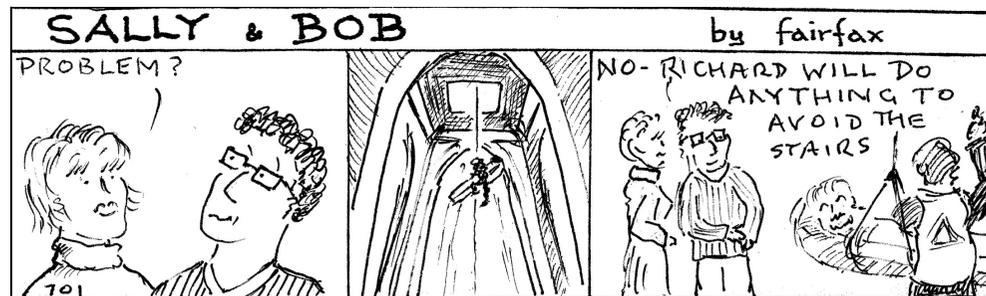
This restoration appeal has gained significant momentum since being launched last summer and to date we have raised locally over £36,000. Grant applications are now in hand plus a variety of fund raising events. These include our ringers growing and selling plants at the Laxfield monthly produce market, held on the first Saturday of each month, and a quiz in the village hall on 7<sup>th</sup> July themed on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the summer of love.



[laxfieldbells@gmail.com](mailto:laxfieldbells@gmail.com)



[@LaxfieldBells](https://www.facebook.com/laxfieldbells)



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## More from the North East

A significant quarter peal was rung at St Mary's, Halesworth on 7th January:

1250 Rutland Surprise Major

- 1 Jason Busby
- 2 Chrissie Pickup
- 3 Mary Garner
- 4 Philip Moyse
- 5 Nicole Rolph
- 6 Mike Whitby
- 7 Peter Lock
- 8 Philip Gorrod C

First of Rutland: 5 & 7

100th quarter peal: 5

1,000th quarter peal: 8

100 and 1,000



The band, clockwise from bottom right

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## Why The Big Surprise?

I hate going wrong. I get cross with myself and hold my own little personal inquest afterwards to try to work out why I made a mistake. What did I forget? What did I not see? Crucially, how can I make sure I don't make that same mistake next time? My wife has been learning Cambridge Surprise Minor recently. She too gets cross with herself when she makes a mistake but each time she rings it there are fewer trips. It served as a reminder to me that occasionally getting something wrong, but then correcting it, is called 'learning'.

I realised that I too needed to be prepared to get it wrong occasionally but that I also need to learn things well enough to minimise the risk of going wrong. I don't just need to know the line, I need to know more than that.

Following my election as South East District Ringing Master in December, I decided to highlight a 'featured method' or two for each district practice – something that might be less familiar to people perhaps, but within the capabilities of most ringers. The idea being to try to send people away from each practice with a smile on their face hopefully having done something new successfully (tea, coffee and cake have also been employed to add the smiles though!)

At our February practice at Sproughton we featured Reverse Canterbury Pleasure Place Doubles and Double Court Bob Minor. We rang both but it was the Double Court that we rang most. The reason for my choice here is that Double Court provides a set of very simple 'rules' by which to ring it. Certainly you should know the line, and all the starts, but there's a very obvious set of method 'rules' too which you can use to help keep yourself right. The treble shows up in obvious places as do your 'course' and 'after' bells and it demonstrates very well that methods contain all sorts of signposts which we can use to avoid mistakes – we just need to know where they are. I gave my wife the method sheet on Double Court (to proof read) and she asked me why she'd not met it before and why nobody seems to ring it. I explained that it was something of a problem child; an unfashionable non-seconds place method, regarded by many as too easy (though it's astonishing how many more advanced ringers seem to struggle with it) and, crucially, it's not called 'Surprise'!

I still remain slightly perplexed by the apparent stampede towards ringing Surprise at the expense of other simpler methods which teach us valuable foundation skills which should make us better ringers overall. Do we sometimes sacrifice quality in favour of complexity? Do we suffer from a slavish addiction to the blue line with no idea about where we pass the treble (for instance) or what others around us are doing? These are questions worthy of consideration, and apply from Plain Bob Doubles onwards.

'Half lead dodge here,' I said recently during a course of Cambridge Minor in an attempt to put a couple of people back on the line at once without saying too much. It worked. Both had forgotten to dodge but afterwards both asked me what a 'half lead dodge' was. Maybe some Reverse Bob or Double Bob Minor might be worth a try...? It wouldn't be a backwards step, we'd just be adding a skill you don't have yet.

Jonathan Williamson

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## Birds in belfries

Regular readers of this little publication may remember an article in last year's spring issue about some peregrines that were seen on the tower of Lavenham church. A nesting platform was erected for them in hopes that they would breed there. This didn't happen. A third peregrine appeared and, as everyone knows, three is a crowd. All three flew off, then one bird reappeared. A single bird has been seen occasionally over the winter months. We will have to wait and hope for developments.

But other birds use churches as their nesting sites. How often have you come out of the church door after ringing practice on a summer evening to the sight and sound of swifts screaming in circles round the church? I can think of several churches where this is the case.

At one particular Suffolk church, however, the swifts have been given a helping hand. In the village of Worlington lives Judith Wakelam who is an expert in the rehabilitation of sick, injured and orphaned swifts. Judith takes up the story:



Swifts flying around the tower of All Saints, Worlington

'The swifts in Worlington church came about because a cottage, not far from All Saints church, that had been home to swifts was to be demolished. I had watched them from my garden over many years and, worried that we would lose the colony, I contacted 'Action for Swifts', a small group of swift enthusiasts, for help, knowing that they had previously installed nest boxes behind the louvres of St Mary's Church, Ely with great success.

The boxes in All Saints were installed in 2009 and in 2010 we had our first breeding pair, rearing two chicks.

By 2015 the number of chicks reared had risen to 40 and in 2016, 27 breeding pairs reared more than 60 chicks.

The boxes were designed, made and installed by Action for Swifts and are monitored regularly. The tower now has boxes on all four walls and cameras in four boxes, streaming live footage to a monitor at the back of the church for visitors to view. The project has been very warmly received and supported by the village and has become quite a talking point.'

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Obviously the bells at Worlington are not rung full circle, but they are chimed. Judith reports that the swifts are totally unaffected by the bells, which must be pretty loud right next to their nest boxes behind the louvres.

The picture shows Simon Evans, centre, bird ringer, inspecting some of the boxes behind the louvres. They can be opened from inside the tower so that the breeding success can be monitored and the swiftlets ringed. Also pictured is Bill Murrells on the left. He has been a bell ringer at Haddenham in Cambridgeshire for 40 years. A retired builder who worked extensively on churches, he builds and installs swift boxes in churches, houses and other buildings. On the right is Dick Newell, the driving force behind Action for Swifts.



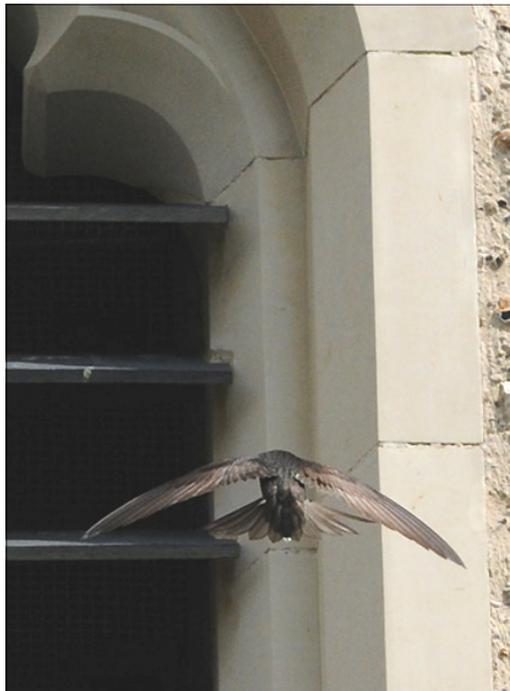
A similar scheme is under way at St John's in Bury St Edmunds. Three boxes were installed there in 2010. No swifts at first, but after alterations to the design two of the boxes were used for the first

time in 2016 with two swiftlets hatched in each. The plan is to increase the number of boxes gradually in the hope of building up a colony of swifts there.

Because modern buildings have no crevices where swifts can nest the provision of boxes has become important in protecting this summer visitor to our country. Church towers with convenient louvres provide excellent nesting sites.

Look out for swifts this summer. They aren't here long, being one of the last of the migrants to arrive and among the first to leave.

You can read more at <http://actionforswifts.blogspot.co.uk/>



We are grateful to Judith Wakelam for the story and the photographs and to Simon Evans for additional information.

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## Thoughts on learning to ring

For 70 years the thought of bell ringing never entered my head, until I read a short item in the Box River News last October. On impulse I phoned Richard Gates and a week later he gave me a guided tour of Boxford tower.

At first sight it all seemed pretty straight forward. I was quickly disillusioned the following Sunday afternoon when I had my first lesson at Edwardstone. Richard invited me to take hold of the tail of a rope.

Suddenly I became very aware of the quarter ton of metal at the other end. It also became apparent that once the bell started moving, there were no brakes to slow it down. On top of that, if you didn't pull the rope properly there didn't seem to be any way to give it an extra push to get it up to the balance. And always lurking at the



back of my mind was the fear that pull too hard, the stay would break and I could be heading up to the ceiling. Under Richard's steady guidance I started on the back stroke, then on the hand stroke, until finally, great achievement, I was combining the two. However, to paraphrase Winston Churchill, this was not the start of the end but merely the beginning of the beginning!

A month later I was introduced to the Boxford band, and the following week rang at Hadleigh. I have a diary note that I had a first attempt at ringing rounds early November and in December progressed to call changes, but that was a real struggle. I could just about keep time with the other ringers, but as soon as a change was called everything started to fall apart – too much to think about and never enough time before the next stroke.

In January progress was slowing down, so Richard kindly arranged for me to practice with the Polstead band as well. First evening only four of us turned up for practice, so I had two pairs of watchful eyes following my every move and mistake. But with only four bells, call changes suddenly started to make sense, and once or even twice it seemed to go quite well.

Four weeks on and I would say that I can ring rounds with confidence if not competence, but still get lost from time to time when changes are called. Occasionally I find myself ringing 'upside down', but at least I can get back on track without too much difficulty. Plain hunting and methods are still a long way in the future. And there they can stay, at least for the time being!

When I took up ringing I was looking for gentle exercise for mind and body, but I never imagined it could become so addictive, or so satisfying on the odd occasion when I get it right and earn an approving nod from my mentors.

Above all it has been a pleasure to meet so many lovely people who have tolerated my mistakes with understanding and friendship. And last but not least my thanks to Richard Gates who has given up so much of his time to an unrewarding pupil, and to Sue at Polstead and Richard Finch at Hadleigh for their encouragement and advice.

Tony Rand

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## Badingham and Dennington Bell Ringers inaugurate their new Gotch

Back in the 1700s it was normal for bell towers to own a gotch which was filled with ale to sustain the ringers as at that time water was not altogether safe to drink. Most original gotches are now museum pieces behind glass. However, the bell tower of St Mary's in Dennington is the proud owner of two gotches from the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, both made of slipware. The early one dating from 1958 was crafted by Derek Andrews, an artist and teacher who lived in the village, and carries the following names: Jack Daines, Edna Houchin, Dennis Houchin, Luke Dowsing, Frederick Neeve, Bob Friend, Reg Stannard, George Cook, and Bruce Turner.



The 1958 gotch

The later gotch was created in 1962 by Mary Newcomb, the Suffolk painter and potter and records the following ringers: Fred Neeve, Peter Nobbs, George Cook, Bruce Turner, Luke Dowsing, Dennis Houchin, Reg Stannard, Michael Ruffles,

Gary Sheppard and Jack Daines.

Many Denningtonians will remember these names and delight in the fact that the Houchins and Peter Nobbs are still full of life, but sadly no longer ringing bells.

During the 2010 restoration and rehangng of Dennington's fine bells - the second heaviest ring of six in Suffolk - the two gotches were brought out of the Tower.

Such was the excitement at their reappearance that it was decided to commission a new gotch to show gratitude to today's bell ringers. The search was now on to find a ceramic artist to design the new gotch, and the choice fell on a young Dane, Malene Hartmann Rasmussen, whose work is inspired by the world of folklore and reminiscent of many of the mythological carvings found in St Mary's, such as the Sciapod who rests under the shade of his huge feet, combined with the Christian symbols of life and death.



L to R: Rev Jonathan Olanczuk, Anne Smith, Derek Woodward, David Mann, David Waller, Ole Jensen (with the new gotch), Rob Woolward, Malene Hartmann Rasmussen (ceramic artist),

Thus, at the bell ringers' supper on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2016 we not only inaugurated the new gotch in the proper manner of drinking ale out of it, but we also celebrated the six hundredth anniversary of Bell No 3 which was cast in 1416 by Richard Baxter of Norwich. It was a splendid occasion, and we were lucky to have as our guests Derek Andrews who crafted the 1958 gotch as well as Malene who designed the very different 2016 model carrying the names of today's bell ringers. We also enjoyed the company of friends who had been involved in the successful fundraising for the bell restoration.

Ole Jensen

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## Guild Annual General Meeting, Beccles, Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2017

The following towers will be open during the afternoon. To make sure you get a ring, even if only one or two of you turn up, the NE District is providing a band at all towers for the duration of the period shown. All towers are within 2 minutes of the main route into Beccles from the south (A12/A145) or the west (A143/B1062)

### Western Route:

Bungay 8, 16cwt 1.45 to 2.30  
Barsham 5, 7cwt 2.15 to 3.00  
Ringsfield 4, 3cwt 2.45 to 3.30

### Southern Route:

Yoxford 6, 11cwt 1.45 to 2.30  
Blythburgh 6, 10 cwt 2.15 to 3.00  
Brampton 5, 7cwt 2.45 to 3.30

### Converging at:

Beccles 10, 25cwt 2.30 to 4.00, and after the meeting subject to demand.

Service at St Michael's Beccles (adjacent to tower) 4.00pm  
Tea in Hungate Hall (4 minutes' walk) 4.45pm  
Followed by the Annual General Meeting at 6.00pm

Further details from Kate Gill [nesecretary@suffolkbells.org](mailto:nesecretary@suffolkbells.org)

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### Dates for your diaries

Guild AGM Beccles 27<sup>th</sup> April

Peace Bell Weekend Cretingham 24<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> June

SW District Open Towers Day 28<sup>th</sup> August

Guild Social Sproughton 16<sup>th</sup> September

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## Cretingham's 'Peace Bell' weekend

In 2014 the country remembered the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of the Great War, as it became known, by the planting of thousands of poppies at the Tower of London. Cretingham has decided to commemorate the centenary of the end of that War by asking Taylor's of Loughborough to cast a sixth bell for its church tower. It will be dedicated on Remembrance Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2018, calling for peace in the world.

The Friends of St Peter's have raised sufficient funds for the bell which will be cast on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2017. However it seemed prudent, whilst the new bell was being installed, to update the fittings of the five existing medieval bells which were last renovated in 1911. To complete the work further significant fundraising is needed and the plan is to start by holding a BELL WEEKEND on June 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup>. It will include a flower festival, lunches and teas on both days and bell related activities. Please come and join us and spread the word.



Photograph by  
John Taylor

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## Little Cornard Bell Restoration Fund Event—Open Towers Day

Before Tony Moore, assistant priest at Little Cornard, passed away a few years ago, it had been his dearest wish that the church bells be restored, rung and maintained for future generations.

All Saints has a ring of five bells, with the tenor dating from 1399 and it is believed that the bells have not been rung for 200 years. It goes without saying that the frame and bells are in a poor state of repair.

After Tony's death, it was decided to continue with the project as a lasting legacy in his memory and to attempt to have the bells ringing by the anniversary of the Armistice in November 2018.

Since then numerous fund-raising events have been held and, together with promised grants and donations, the fund is steadily growing.



As part of this fund raising drive the South West District will hold an Open Towers Day on Bank Holiday Monday 28<sup>th</sup> August.

It is hoped to open as many of the District Towers as possible during the day, so please put the date in your diary.

Your support would be greatly appreciated.

David Lee

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## Ringling at School

On July 1<sup>st</sup> 2016, the Guild was lucky enough to be invited to run a session introducing change ringing to the pupils of Kingsfleet Primary School as part of their community week.

John, Roger, and Brian from St Margaret's Ipswich and Honor and I from Felixstowe, along with three members of staff from Kingsfleet school introduced 30 children to the art of change ringing.

Our ideas for the programme were:

- 1) start with a DVD (2 - 3 minutes.);
- 2) show and explain the model bell;
- 3) explain and demonstrate 'rounds' using a white board, a visual aid and adults ringing 'rounds'; divide into groups and the adults and children 'have a go' at ringing rounds together on chime bars;
- 4) children to fill in names of bell parts on diagram sheet;
- 5) play CD of real ringing;
- 6) using white board explain how 'real changes' on bells work;
- 7) using visual aid, adults demonstrate how to ring call changes, then the children have a go;
- 8) finish with a repeat of the DVD.

It was a very successful morning, and I was asked by the head mistress to form a weekly chime-bar club in order to continue the children's interest in bell-ringing.

At the beginning of the Christmas term, twelve Year 5 children started: they began the difficult process of learning how to ring a chime bar in rounds and call changes to Queens and back. By the end of the Christmas term, nine children were still interested and gave a very professional demonstration in assembly.

Meanwhile, five children brought a parent each to St. John's church, Felixstowe to see if they would like to learn real bell-ringing. Four children and five adults are still



Photo of St John's, Felixstowe by  
Chris Garner



very interested, and two of each of those have attended every possible session. A couple have other commitments which have limited the number of sessions but all in all, we have four new ringers definitely making progress. So it's been a very worthwhile endeavour!

Many thanks to John Girt, Roger Coley, Honor Dines, Mike Rogers, the staff at Kingsfleet School, and Brian Aldous and Richard Weeks, without whom there would be no training for the new recruits.

Jacky Savage, Felixstowe

SUFFOLK GUILD OF RINGERS SOCIAL

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## Saints Peter and Paul, Bardwell

There was a church at Bardwell long before the Norman Conquest, but no trace remains of the Saxon church. A church is recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086, but the church we see today was built in the late 14th and early 15th centuries, completed around 1421. The one exception is the chancel, which was rebuilt and its floor lowered during a Victorian restoration of 1853.



The medieval church owes its present form to its major patrons, Sir William de Bardwell (d. 1434) and his wife, whose arms appear in the spandrels of the arch over the doorway of the south porch. Sir William, in armour, is depicted in a medieval stained glass window and was featured in the editor's quiz in Issue 16 of the magazine. In recent years several traces of wall paintings have been uncovered and

conserved. During the medieval period the church was home to a Guild dedicated to St Peter, to which most of the village population seems to have belonged. The medieval Guild Hall still exists but it is now a private house.

The photo on the front cover shows the porch with its flushwork decoration.

The magnificent hammer-beam roof in the nave dates from 1421. It was originally decorated with carved figures of angels, but only four of the angels remain. One of these holds an open book on which is written the date 1421. The roof still has much of its painted decoration as you can see in the picture here, reproduced with kind permission of Michael Rimmer from his book 'Angel Roofs of East Anglia.'



There is an unusual monument, dated 1652, to Thomas and Bridget Reade. It shows their kneeling figures facing each other and their seven children, in various poses, some holding skulls to show they pre-deceased their parents.

In 2009 the bells were restored and augmented to 8 by Hayward Mills. Since then, a new band has been slowly built up. We have two accredited ART teachers and we teach using Learning the Ropes with most of the band at Level Two and Three. We often have eight ringers on a Sunday and we always welcome anyone to join our practice on a Wednesday evening.

Ruith Suggett