

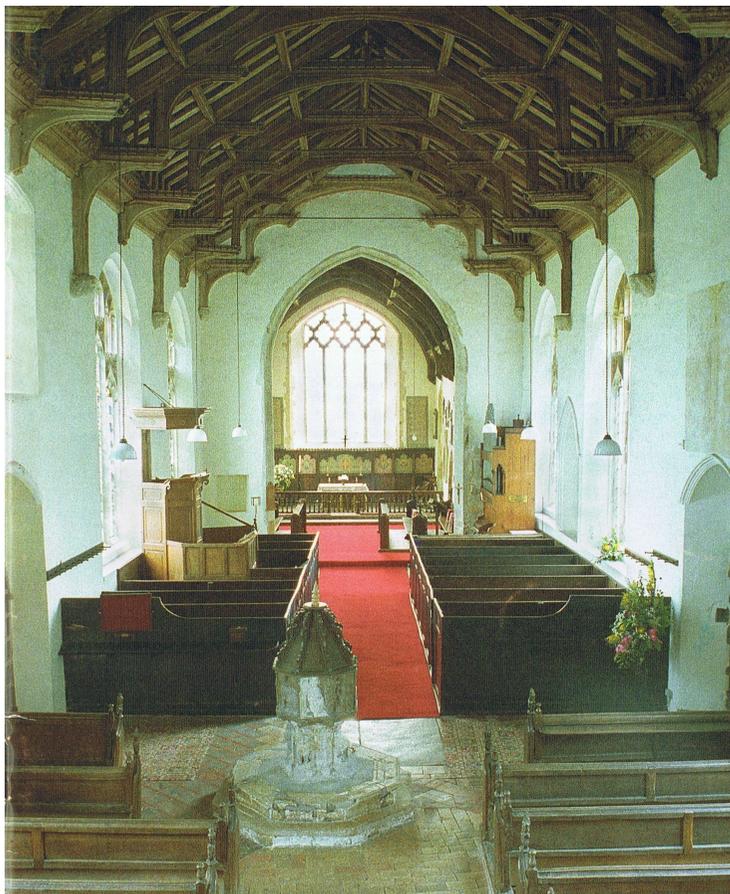


Magazine of the Suffolk Guild of Ringers

Issue 2

Summer 2010

Awl a'huld



St Mary's Gissingham. See back page.

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From the Editorial Team

This is the second edition of the new style Guild Magazine and now we have a title for it based on an idea from George Pipe, who receives the chairman's prize.

It was gratifying to receive over fifty suggestions for the title, some quite straightforward, others rather quirky and a couple of rather strange ones, but the editors thank everyone who sent a suggestion. It is good to know that there is so much interest in the new publication.

Please may we have your thoughts on the magazine, the chairman's comments or any other ringing matter. We don't have the space to print letters, but we would like to cover your views.

We feel that it would be useful to explain what we are aiming to achieve and why we have increased the circulation, particularly as some members at the AGM questioned the need for a printed magazine at all.

The main reason for having a printed magazine is to give people in a ringing chamber on practice night something of interest to read while they are waiting their turn to ring. We have also found that visiting bands have enjoyed reading the first issue.

The reason for the increase in the number of copies sent to each tower is that we hope the magazine will provide a public relations link between the Guild and the other users of the many churches where we ring. This is why we are encouraging towers to give at least one copy to their incumbent so that they can feel more strongly connected to what happens in their towers and consequently be more supportive of local ringing. A copy can be left in the church for the casual visitor.

This is why we are looking for timeless articles about anything connected with ringing, No more than four hundred words please and a relevant photo will be welcomed. If you have something to contribute you can send it by e-mail to magazine@suffolkbells.org.uk or as written copy to Sue Freeman at High Meadow, Martens Lane, Polstead, Colchester, CO6 5AG. The final date for copy for the next issue is 15th October.

Finally, we hope you will enjoy the second issue and we would like to thank all contributors for the articles they have sent.



From the Chairman

The day before our AGM a letter appeared in the Ringing World in which the writer complained that her local AGM was a pointless, irrelevant, undemocratic exercise, designed to keep a small clique in power and to block any attempt at constructive debate - a timely and salutary warning for me!

On reflection, I felt that, by and large, a ringing society gets the officers it deserves. A society is only an umbrella for its members to huddle under, not a separate being completely divorced from those members. The power to change comes from within, and there is no point people moaning from the outside and not exerting their democratic rights to vote.



A few years ago I helped organise a coup. The local Master had been in post for over twenty years and did less in a year for that Guild than Richy does for us in a week. Nobody stood against him; meetings were tedious; nobody went; nothing ever happened. A friend had recently retired and had plenty of ideas. We persuaded him to stand, and encouraged people to turn up and vote. The vote went overwhelmingly in favour of a change. What was disappointing was the fact that it took a concerted effort by a handful of people to bring about the change. How can we prevent similar stagnation in Suffolk?

I believe that the simple answer is to establish effective communication between the officers and the members, not just at the AGM, but throughout the year. This new magazine is part of the drive to inform. Modern technology makes communication easy, and we now have an email list so that, on important topics, officers can advise members. Finally, the Districts play an important part in galvanising local opinion by bringing members together at regular meetings.

A good example of this two-way communication working well was the debate about Vice Presidents. My inclination was to abolish the position entirely, but members persuaded me, by email and at District meetings, that it was preferable to adopt an evolutionary rather than a revolutionary approach, and so, instead of tying up hours at the AGM, the matter was dealt with swiftly and with a very large degree of unanimity.

I like to think that the Suffolk Guild does not suffer from apathy (over 100 at the AGM), complacency (six out of 18 officers replaced) or a failure of democracy. I very much hope that, if I or any officer fails to perform, the members would not simply shrug their shoulders and accept a second-class administration for a first-class Guild.

Do read that letter (RW page 338). Are we guilty in Suffolk of any of the traits described? Do stop me being complacent! Tell me someone!

Philip Gorrod Guild Chairman

North East District Victorious

The fifteenth of May 2010 was certainly a special day. Unexpected football teams win the English and Scottish finals, England beat Australia at cricket and – more important – the N.E. District win the 8 bell striking competition and so take Maurice Rose's trophy.

Starting in 1984 it took us until 2006 to get a shield on the base; four years later we win again with, almost, the same band. Just the oldest one out and the youngest (16 years) ringer in.

A good day. Good weather, good bells, well organised competition and, of course, very well judged!

Given the trophy to take home, the youngest member of the band was heard to say as he walked off into the night, "That was worth doing." I could only agree.

Don Price



The band: Trevor Hughes, Don Price, Philip Moyes, Philip Gorrod, Maggie Ross, Jonathan Stevens, Suzanne Stevens, Richard Rapior

Ringers' teas. Chocolate brownies

These are a great favourite at ringing events. The recipe makes 40 small squares, so goes a long way! They are very rich, so a small piece each is enough.

You will need:

- 240g butter
- 2 tbsps cold coffee
- 240g caster sugar
- 100g SR flour
- 200g dark chocolate chips
- 360g very dark chocolate
- 3 or 4 free range eggs
- 1 tsp vanilla essence
- 200g chopped walnuts



News from the North West District—Ixworth Dedication

On Sunday 18th April, only a week after the Guild had descended upon Ixworth for its AGM, the Service of Dedication of the new and restored bells was held. It was lovely to greet friends from all over the Guild again to celebrate the end of a very successful project carried out by White's of Appleton, who were represented at the service by Brian White. The service was led by The Rt Revd Clive Young, Bishop of Dunwich and he showed his fondness for, and interest in bells in a thoughtful yet very witty sermon which was appreciated by all. The church had been decorated with lots of spring flowers and the sun shone to make this a very happy occasion, followed by the traditional abundant Ixworth tea and ringing. During the service, a symbolic bellrope was handed to new Tower Captain Danny Willis who has taken over this role from Ken Brown. Ken will continue as Tower Correspondent for Ixworth. Practices are held every Tuesday evening and everyone is most welcome to join us.

New contact details are; Tower Correspondent, Ken Brown, 01359 232606.
Tower Captain, Danny Willis, 01359 233257



The Ixworth ringers with Bishop Clive, Revd Phillip Garbett and Brian White of White's of Appleton.

Line a 35cm x 24cm (approx) tin.

Melt the chocolate and butter together in a bowl over simmering water. In another bowl mix the coffee, beaten eggs, sugar and vanilla essence. Beat in the melted chocolate and butter. Fold in the flour, walnuts and chocolate chips. Pour into the tin and bake at 190 C for 30-35 minutes. Cool in the tin, then cut into squares with a hot knife.

From the South East—Dennington Restoration

The Bell Restoration at The Church of St Mary the Virgin, Dennington came to its successful conclusion on January 31st 2010 when the Rt Revd Nigel Stock, Bishop of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich, came to re-dedicate the newly restored bells at a service attended by more than 250 people, who had supported and followed the Bell Project since its inception in 2004.

We know that Dennington had a ring of 5 bells in 1553 - plus a sanctuary bell. The present bells comprise two mediæval bells (c. 1416 and c. 1470), one dated 1626, and the remaining three cast by Bowell of Ipswich in 1915, the year the bells were last re-hung. So it was now time for action to bring this fine peal of bells up to modern ringing standards.

Following consultations with the DAC, the Suffolk Guild of Ringers' Technical Advisers, and Whitechapel Bell Foundry, a faculty was applied for to retune and re-hang our bells. This was granted in November, and in April 2008 we launched our Bell Appeal to raise £75,000 to fund the new frame and bell refurbishment as well as any building work necessary.

We were lucky to receive a very substantial private donation, but also fi-

nancial support from individuals and grant-giving bodies. At the end of 2008 we felt confident to instruct Whitechapel Bell Foundry to go ahead. The total of our fundraising efforts reached over £83,000.

2009 saw the project's execution. The bells were rung for the last time on Sunday, May 10th, and a team of local bell ringers started to dismantle all the appurtenances in readiness for the bells' transport to Whitechapel Bell Foundry. On July 9th the low-loader arrived, each bell was given a final gong in the presence of the Dennington schoolchildren and then ceremoniously hoisted across the hedge to the waiting lorry.

A party of 38 visited the Bell Foundry in early November when the bells had been retuned, the new frame arrived in December, and in early January the bells were returned and re-hung.

Looking back I feel I can say that the Dennington bell restoration was a great success from start till finish. It had its moments, but thanks to a dedicated, professional team any obstacles were speedily overcome.

Lisbeth Jensen Chairman, Dennington Bell Appeal

Advertise in this magazine

To advertise in this magazine in full colour from as little as £10 per quarter page e-mail magazine@suffolkbells.org.uk

Assistance with artwork can be provided if required.

South West District - Striking Competition

The competition was held on June 26th at Polstead on a fine, sunny evening. Ringers were able to sit outside in the sun while listening to the bells and waiting their turn to ring.

Five bands entered, only half last year's number, as people had other commitments on the day. This is always a hazard at this time of the year. Nevertheless it was a most enjoyable occasion.

The competition was judged by David Sparling, from Essex. His comments were well received as his remarks were always helpful and his tone amusing. Kersey retained the trophy, having rung a touch of plain bob minor that was a pleasure to listen to. The Stratford St Mary band were the runners up.

The evening ended with a marvellous bring-and-share supper which was enjoyed by all.

The winning team. (l to r)

David Howe, Lesley Wilson, David Steed, Kate Banks, Neville Whittell, Crawford Allen, the judge: David Sparling and a supporter from Hadleigh.



Helen's ordination

Congratulations to Helen Mitchell, ringer at Stoke by Nayland, who was ordained as a deacon on Sunday 27th June at the Cathedral.



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Ringling Plain Hunt on Five Bells

Last time I wrote about call changes, this time it was suggested I might write about plain hunt. Trying to ring plain hunt for the first time can appear extremely daunting, and I would urge learners to spend time writing out a plain lead, and also to purchase one of the booklets like 'One Per Learner' which they will find extremely useful.

Ringling Plain Hunt is of course the point at which you will eventually move on to ringing methods, and it is interesting to note that all methods originated from simple plain hunt. This was because ringing a lead of plain hunt over and over again was somewhat limited, and ringers looked at ways of extending the ringing. Simple methods developed and evolved into the highly sophisticated set up we have today.

My experience has shown that often learners are pushed on to plain hunt before they have acquired the ability to control a bell properly, and consequently find it difficult to ring a bell at the right speed, either holding up and waiting, or ringing faster, both of which are required. It is therefore vital to ensure that bell control is adequately taught in the early stages well before plain hunt is anticipated.

The lead of plain hunt on five bells runs to ten different changes, and if you write them out you can see the path of each of the five bells.

Looking at bell number 1, it will be seen that this bell is leading to begin with. It starts by moving up at handstroke into seconds place over bell number 2. It then continues at backstroke over bell number 4 into thirds place, and so on into fourths place and fifths place. All of these changes of position require the ringer **to hold their bell up** at both handstroke and back stroke because they are moving up towards the back and each bell they follow needs to cut in under them. After an additional blow at the back in fifths at handstroke, number one bell will then have to move **down** towards the front, and here the need to be able to ring the bell more quickly occurs. This is because the bells that are going up to the back need to move up over their bell. After striking in fourths, thirds and seconds place their bell will now be back where it started and leads for two blows to finish. To start again the learner then has to immediately commence holding their bell up to go towards the back as before.

12345
21435
24153
42513
45231
54321
53412
35142
31524
13254
12345

All this happens very quickly, and unless the learner can rapidly change from ringing slowly for five blows, and then ringing quickly for the remainder of the plain lead, difficulty and frustration will occur. The other four bells start at their respective places, the even bells move to the front, and the odd bells go out to the back. The same principle of moving out slowly, and in quickly, applies equally to each bell as it moves backwards and forwards.

Winston Girling

The importance of good handling

One of the things I think is incumbent upon ringers is that we pass on to beginners and newer members the skills we were taught or have acquired. A bit like the old 'trades' really.

Ringling is a constant learning curve especially the theory side, but as with anything involving manual dexterity: golf, bowls, cricket, archery or whatever, good style is essential. There are, of course, exceptions, but generally the better the handling the better the striking, quite apart from a nice style being pleasing to the eye and comfortable for the performer.

I have to say that a lot of our newer ringers today are not good handlers and stylists and as a result much of our striking is not as polished as it could be. I would like to help here. Ideally coaching in any form is best done in the belfry not in the pub afterwards but this is sometimes difficult and one doesn't want to cut across the beginner's teacher or cause embarrassment. So when and how can one help this very unfortunate element in our ringing?

We need to be honest about this. "Is my handling competent? Could it be improved?" Don't be afraid to address this. It could lead to long term benefits for you such as handling tenors, very light bells, or bad going or odd-struck bells and it could help you when you come to teach.

I would be very willing to run say a Saturday morning session (seminar sounds a bit posh) explaining the good practice of handling, teaching teachers too if you will, helping to correct faults, thus ensuring better style which will lead to better striking. It is **NOT** a ques-

tion of picking on people but I know of at least 30 'newer' ringers whose style is frankly poor and I believe I could help them. No one need be uncomfortable about this. After all, if you are having trouble with your golf swing, your tennis strokes, your driving or cutting in cricket, you go to the 'Pro' or someone 'who's been there'.

If you are interested in a well organised handling session combined with, say, a pub lunch and some afternoon ringing, let me know. I would be happy to arrange it.

George Pipe

From the website

Ten Good Handling Tips

1. Stand correctly.
2. Relax.
3. Keep the rope taut.
4. Arms straight at both strokes.
5. Hands together at both strokes.
6. Guide the rope straight down.
7. Look ahead.
8. Tail to the rear of the sally.
9. All fingers round the sally at hand-stroke.
10. Constantly review your handling: we all lapse into lax ways.

Ten Good Striking Tips

1. Count the rhythm.
2. Listen to your bell.
3. Check for odd struckness.
4. Maintain constant spaces and speed.
5. Rely on your ears not your eyes.
6. Always be self-critical.
7. Lead tidily.
8. Only make small adjustments.
9. Do not believe the ropes.
10. Practice listening when ringing.

Crossword by Richard Gates

Clues across

1 Members of a closed circle at an auction wanted in the tower (7)

2 Water features in Cumbria are Great in Canada (5)

8 Afternoon break from fast eaters (3)

9 Found in a ballot box to decide if every man should have one (5)

10 Sounds like something smelt by some hundreds (5)

11 Are we there..? Request I add to the abominable snowman (3)

12 By any other name this went up (4)

14 Surrounded by sea , it sounds like part of a church (4)

15 Request from part of the task force (3)

16 The germ and dirt hide the hun (6)

18 Twelve of them make it to the end of our legs (6)

20 Singular metal for Herge's hero (3)

22 Particle of a male cat (4)

24 Wise man becomes part of some stuffing (4)

28 Small jar used for illegal smoking (3)

30 A fool for Dostoyevsky's novel (5)

31 Hot term less Her Majesty make this a river fisher (5)

32 Part of the filler makes one not well (3)

33 Pulls our American friends (5)

34 Rubs out visages led by EF (7)

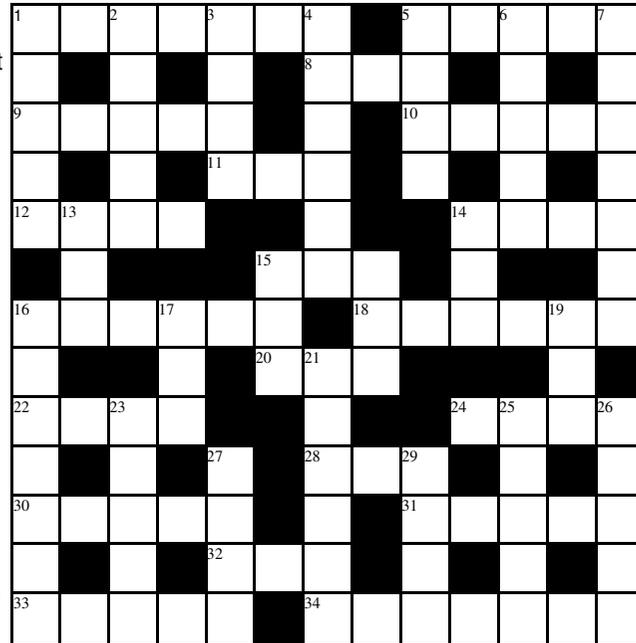
Clues down

1 British car no longer made for wild travels (5)

2 Stone changed to musical guidance (5)

3 To recall the Big local name for New Orleans is peasy? (4)

4 He says definitely they are United (6)



5 Learners start to acknowledge what they don't have (4)

6 Cambridge college for Royalty? (5)

7 Senior nurses may be female siblings (7)

13 The last count down is singular (3)

14 Capital description of Olympic organisers (1,1,1)

15 Dec's insect friend (3)

16 Seriously concerning the pull of the planets (7)

17 Be quiet mother (3)

19 Hard boiled or is he a good one (3)

21 Him paleface partly to stick on spike (6)

23 Edible plant which shows you know them singly (5)

25 Spoken by Greeks in the room at the top of the house (5)

26 He is working for money, but sounds like Eric's comic partner (5)

27 In reverse is it the answer? (2,2)

29 Set off partly to be a posh person (4)

Looking Back - What a way to end a war

After the V.E. Day ringing (victory in Europe) on 8th May 1945, the ringers expected to ring for V.J. Day on 15th August 1945. The St Albans Abbey ringers were given the meeting time well in advance.

On the day we entered the Abbey grounds through the Sumpter Yard and were pleased to see a crowd of people gathered in the open space on the South side of the building.

"How decent of them," we thought. "They must have enjoyed the V.E. ringing and have come to hear the next lot!" As we walked nearer we saw people were gathered in front of the Dean who was standing on a box, shouting and waving his arms about. We heard some words:

"inhumane", "inexcusable", but walked on round the east end to the ringers' entrance on the North side.

In front of the locked door stood the Captain of the ringers. He stubbed out his fag under a shoe and gave us the news: the Dean had forbidden all ringing because of the way the Japanese were forced to surrender. Two Atomic bombs had been dropped on unarmed civilians, killing thousands.

The Dean certainly made the headlines in the newspapers next day; from these came C.N.D. and other attempts to outlaw atomic warfare that continue to this day.

The whole affair was hard to understand: lots of Japanese killed, lots of British and American soldiers not killed and so could come home.

Some of the British had been away for nearly six years, much of that time spent in the jungles of Burma where burning leeches off their bodies with

lighted cigarettes was the least of their troubles. Or so they said when they came home for "demob". They also told us they had reservations about the Dean's opinions. They were glad to be home and ringing again at last.

Don Price

An Ode to Ringers

When GO is called we don't depart,
At STAND it's time to sit,
Our HUNT does not involve a fox,
By BLOWS no one is hit.

ROYAL for us involves no kings
Though QUEENS may there be found,
No one is tempted to revolve
When comes the call GO ROUND.

When STRIKING we are hard at work,
The BALANCE you have to feel,
Five courses do not make a feast
But just a QUARTER PEAL.

A SINGLE ringer may be spliced
A SPLICED one still unwed,
And when we shout to someone 'BOB',
It may be Joe or Fred.

When LEADING WRONG we may be right,
When IN we're not at HOME,
DELIGHT may bring us all to grief
SURPRISE may well be known.

So if you watch us at our task
And hear the words we call,
There's only one you'll know and love:
The merciful THAT'S ALL.

The Birthday Party

I would like to write a big THANK YOU to all the ringers who made my 80th birthday so very special. To all who arranged, called and rang in peals and quarter peals to mark the day, to those who arranged food at the unexpected gathering, and to friends who left warm firesides on a cold night to attend. Believe me, it meant a lot.

Afterwards I began to remember how it all began. Nearly 70 years ago a boy edged in to watch the local bellringers. As his eyes followed the ropes up and down he saw boards fixed to the tower walls with names on them he knew: family friends, relatives. Perhaps this is what you do when you grow up?

“Can I learn to ring?” I ask the grey headed men.

“No. You are too small!” I don't leave.

Eventually one of the men puts a wooden box on the floor. “Stand on that.” Then he puts the end of a bell rope in my hand. So it began. They taught me what they knew: Grandsire and Stedman Caters, Kent Royal: their boundaries. So began a lifetime's interest.

Don Price



After the birthday peal. Left to right: Tom Scase, Don Price, Kate Eagle, Peter Harper, David Stanford, Helen Price, Mike Whitby, Mary Garner, Maggie Ross, Stephen Pettman.

And for news of everything else - www.suffolkbells.org.uk



High Maintenance - Wooden Frames (need looking after)

I get the odd comment about how bells at Tower A go well but at Tower B “go like pigs”. Both have wooden frames and new fittings. The difference? One is looked after, the other isn't. So how should you look after your wooden frame?

Good housekeeping is a start. Keep it clean and avoid a build up of rubbish and rubble between frame and tower. Keep an eye on the roof too; wet encourages rot.

A good time to tackle your maintenance is after a warm dry spell, as the timber will have shrunk. A frame with loose joints will suffer and get worse if ringing continues, the bells becoming more and more of a handful. In extreme cases the frame may end up hitting the tower.

Before you go up, remember to think safety: stout shoes, no loose clothing, don't work on your own and put a sign in the ringing chamber saying that the bells are being worked on and not to touch the ropes. It helps too, when you are working on a specific bell, to lift that rope a little and tie it to the frame.

With spanner, wire brush, Plusgas and oil in hand, tighten those frame rods. One at a time, wire brush the threads, take the nut off, check it won't bottom on the thread when you put it back (add an extra washer or two if necessary), put a drop of oil on the thread and get the nut back on, tight. Don't pull the washer into the frame; if the wood is a bit soft, make up a plate washer (150 x 100 x 6mm) to spread the load. Any joints that don't tighten up may need slips of wood between the tenon shoulder and the frame cill.

Frame nice and tight? The next job, if you have them, is wooden headstocks. Same procedure; one nut at a time, free it off, clean the thread, drop of oil and then tighten up. Use some care to do the tightening evenly; you won't want the bell hitting the frame. Tighten the crown staple, if you have an independent one, last.

Need help with any of this? Ask a member of the BAC team to come along; they will be pleased to.

Jonathan Stevens.



Mini people try the mini ring at the Offton barbecue

Borrowing the Mini-ring

The Mini-ring can be borrowed by anyone for any reasonable purpose, conditions apply. Contact Brian Whiting on 01449 6677766.

A donation to the Suffolk Guild Bell Restoration Fund is normally required. The level of donation can be discussed with the trustee.

Preference will be given to Suffolk Guild members promoting ringing.

Bells Restoration Projects: How to make them happen.

This article is intended to be the first of several, and assumes you are looking for initial basic guidelines.

You will need to decide exactly what it is *you* want to do. This will take time. The Parish Priest ought to be involved, and the PCC must be since they own the bells. They should be told that you will not impinge on their fund-raising: bells money comes from different sources.

You will need a 'Prime Mover' and a good supporting committee. I suggest this is a committee of the PCC. Have a person of some significance as Chairman. As a committee of the PCC you will have the charitable status you need to get grants, and you may still be able to get refunds of VAT.

Talk to English Heritage and the Diocesan Advisory Council to let them know what you are working at. Don't apply for grants yet, other than perhaps a pump-priming grant of a few hundred pounds to pay an engineer to check whether the tower is strong enough for what you are proposing. At the end the largest sums will have come from grants and sponsorships of bells, wheels etc.

Note that there are two elements to the prospective contract(s): (a) the building works (steps, windows, etc), and (b) bells. At this stage you must get rough costings for each. Ideally get a surveyor to help on costing the building works. He might not charge for this if you say you will take him on for a fee if the project goes ahead. (A fee of 15% of building costs is not too much, if you negotiate on when tranches will be paid and for what.) A builder might well help to

draw up rough specifications and costings for the building works without charging you. Get someone reputable and tell him you will put him on your tender list. Go to three bell hangers and ask them to come and give you draft specifications and estimates of costs. Do the job right: don't skimp. Out of all this will come a safe cover figure for costs. After this stage never talk of estimates: what you will need are firm fixed price quotations.

This is the time for a meeting to consult the whole community, as by now you will have answers to most of the questions they will ask. You need them on-side to donate funds and to become ringers. Get someone from another successful project to join you. Then talk to the DAC and get their Secretary/ Members to come and have a look at you. Please contact me if you think I can help.

Simon Cottrell Tel: 01728 723309.

The Guild Social

Saturday 20th November

The North East District are organising the Guild Social this year and what a treat they have in store.

Around Beccles and Bungay

Ringling in the afternoon will be followed by a meal and a quiz night at Ringsfield.

Tickets from Julie Rapior £7.50

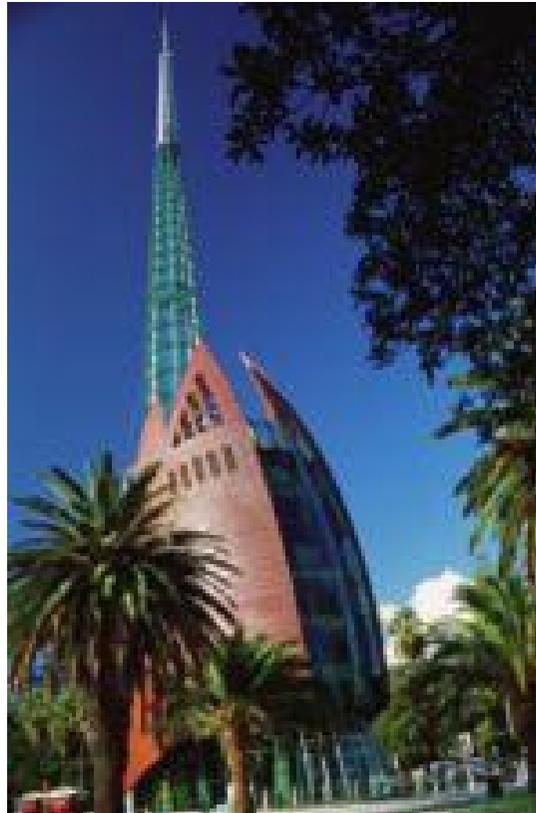
February in Australia

It was on January 31st that we left a cold and frosty Suffolk to have a second adventure in Australia.

On our first morning in Perth, Western Australia, we strode off sightseeing and arrived at the Swan Tower of bells for their lunch time ringing. Laura Ivey had a good boost that day as a lady from Queensland had popped in for the first time having recently moved to Perth and announced that 20 years ago she had been a ringer. Laura was off: "Just ring this bell up. You'll be fine." Then the next bell, then some call-changes on eight.

You really have to take your hat off to the Perth ringers for their commitment to ringing so regularly during the week so the public can view both the ringers (through one way glass) and the bells swinging, as well as being able to have a wonderful view down the Swan River and see the many new exhibits they have on bells. There is a small set of carillon bells which have come from Canberra mounted on the top of the tower. For a dollar you can choose a piece of music to be played. The day we arrived was the first day the newly fitted clock chimed on its bells, so it was a quick dash downstairs to see that in action.

It is always interesting to meet the ringers here as they are such a variety of people and ages. The young ones are generally back packers who start by having a small job working at the Swan tower: front desk/window cleaning etc and then get drawn into learning to ring. Then there are ringers from all over the U.K who have homes in Western Aus-



tralia. where they live in the summer months or full time. Some are just over to visit their relatives who have moved there and then there are the visitors like ourselves. It makes for a real mixture of ringers at many different stages of ringing. The tower is a real magnet for visitors, both ringing and otherwise. It is the meeting place for bus tours and boat trips so draws many folk to that area. Ringing visitors seem to be drawn to it and I know of Suffolk ringers who have rung there, but never attend say a District practice.

Sally Munnings

St Mary's Gislingham

This large church of 140 feet stands on one side of a former and larger medieval green overlooking the site of Gislingham manor. The earliest mention of a church in Gislingham occurs in 1087 when half its income was granted to Eye Priory.

The widened nave is one of the widest and longest aisle-less naves in Suffolk. It is spanned by a ten bay double hammer-beamed roof, which, it has been suggested, may well be a double hammer-beam development of the single hammer-beam roof at nearby Finningham. Delicate tracery survives in two of the arched braces.

The original tower was under construction in 1386 and a number of gifts are recorded toward the cost of construction; in 1407 John Stockys, the Rector bequeathed 15 shillings towards the payment of the bells. In 1518 £3 6s 8d was bequeathed to the '... fabric of the new tower, which probably indicates that the tower was already in need of re-building. The tower fell in 1599 though the four bells were undamaged and removed to a temporary cage in 1605.

The Bishop of Norwich had often ordered the churchwardens to rebuild the tower but it took an appearance at the Commissary's court in 1638 to get things started. An agreement was made with Edmund Petto of Bramfield to build a new tower of 60 feet at a cost of £420 by October 1640, which would include a

new five bell frame. The four original bells were recast into five in 1640, but with faults which led to three being recast again in 1641 and the remaining two in 1671. A sixth, a new treble, was added in 1841 at a cost of £60. Having deteriorated and been silent for many decades, the bells were restored into a new frame, augmented to eight and re-tuned in 2006. The first service ring of the 'new' bells was for the children's service on Christmas eve that year.

Inside the tower are decorative panels with the names of the ringers of 1717. Below each panel are the initials of their successors and the number of the bell rung. A table records a double peal of 10,080 changes of Grandsire Bob in six hours 35 minutes. The names of the ringers are given and around the edge, with bell numbers, symbols of their trades are found. Bricklayer (trowel), two blacksmiths (anvils), sexton (spade), turf cutter (his special spade) and a rat catcher (rat). Or is it a carpenter's awl? Opinion is divided.

