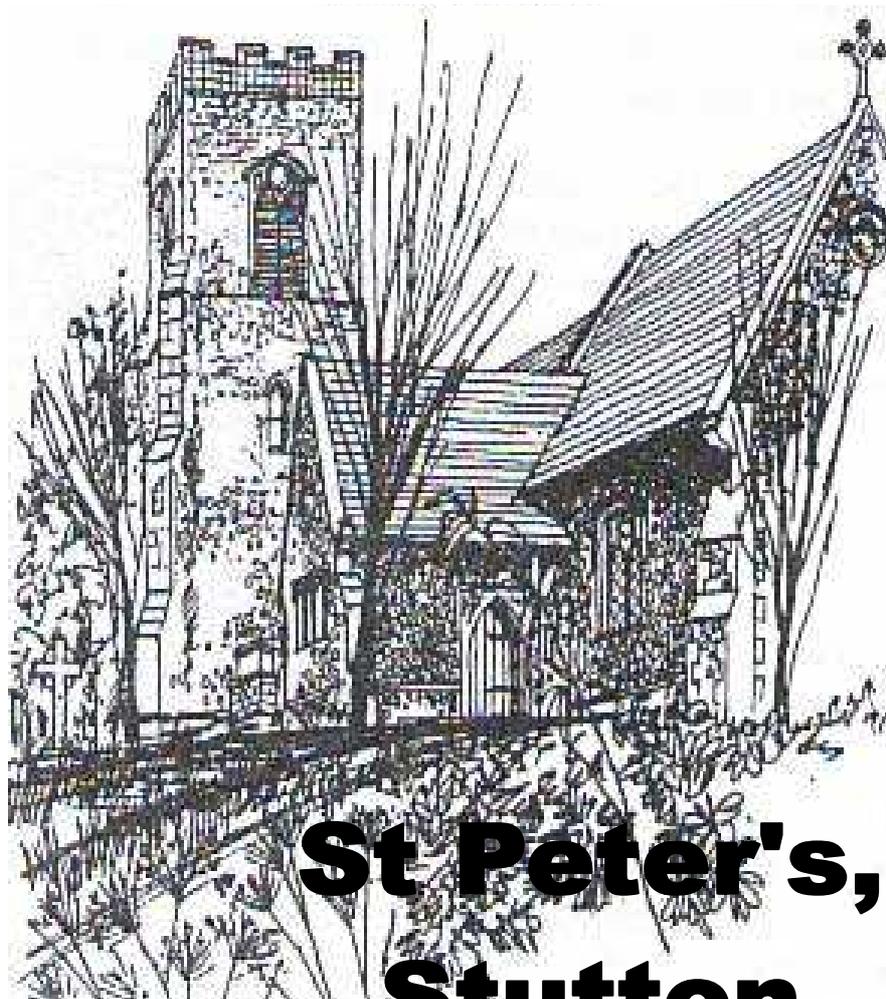


Suffolk Guild of Ringers Newsletter



**St Peter's,
Stutton**

Winter 2006

Editorial

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Thought for the Season

by Robert Louis Stevenson

Loving Father, Help us remember the birth of
Jesus, that we may share in the song of the
angels, the gladness of the shepherds,
and worship of the wise men.

Close the door of hate and open the door of
love all over the world. Let kindness come with
every gift and good desires with every greeting.
Deliver us from evil by the blessing which
Christ brings, and teach us to be merry with
clear hearts.

May the Christmas morning make us happy to
be thy children, and Christmas evening bring
us to our beds with grateful thoughts, forgiving
and forgiven, for Jesus' sake.

Amen



DEADLINE for
Spring Issue...
Monday 26th February

Hello all!

Christmas is coming, and what a wonderful time of year it is too! Through all the hussle and bussle of the festive season, comes a message of hope, light and peace to all who believe. The story of God becoming man in Christ, has to be one of the greatest stories ever told. Even for those who don't believe that this child was the Son of God, the story still compels people to live in peace and wait in hope.

Because of this story, even a war was stopped:

At midnight on Christmas Eve 1914 firing from the German trenches suddenly stopped. A German brass band began playing Christmas carols. Early, Christmas morning, the German soldiers came out of their trenches, approaching the allied lines, calling "Merry Christmas". At first the allied soldiers thought it was a trick, but they soon climbed out of their trenches and shook hands with the German soldiers. The truce lasted a few days, and the men exchanged presents of cigarettes and plum puddings, sang carols and songs. They even played a game of Soccer.

At Christmas we ring our bells to proclaim this message of love to all those who can hear. How can we echo this message in the running of our everyday lives? This is the challenge of the Christmas Story. *Carl*



Did you know?

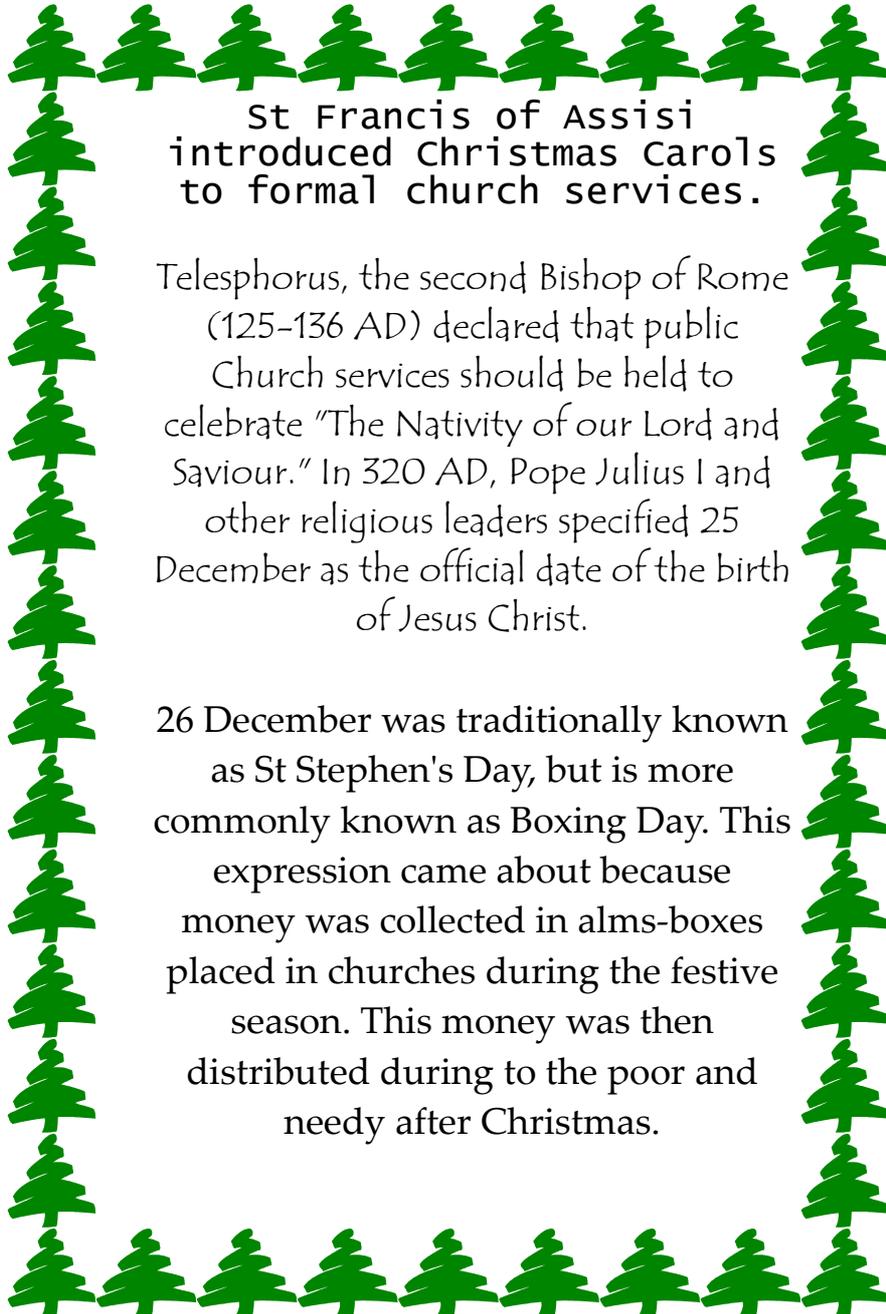
The common abbreviation for Christmas to Xmas is derived from the Greek alphabet. X is letter Chi, which is the first letter of Christ's name in the Greek alphabet.

Oliver Cromwell, in England banned Christmas Carols between 1649 and 1660. Cromwell thought that Christmas should be a very solemn day so he banned carols and parties. The only celebration was by a sermon and a prayer service.

In 1643, the British Parliament officially abolishes the celebration of Christmas.

The Puritans in America tried to make Thanksgiving Day the most important annual festival instead of Christmas.

Silent Night was written in 1818, by an Austrian priest Joseph Mohr. He was told the day before Christmas that the church organ was broken and would not be prepared in time for Christmas Eve. He was saddened by this and could not think of Christmas without music, so he wanted to write a carol that could be sung by choir to guitar music. He sat down and wrote three stanzas. Later that night the people in the little Austrian Church sang "Stille Nacht" for the first time.



St Francis of Assisi introduced Christmas Carols to formal church services.

Telesphorus, the second Bishop of Rome (125-136 AD) declared that public Church services should be held to celebrate "The Nativity of our Lord and Saviour." In 320 AD, Pope Julius I and other religious leaders specified 25 December as the official date of the birth of Jesus Christ.

26 December was traditionally known as St Stephen's Day, but is more commonly known as Boxing Day. This expression came about because money was collected in alms-boxes placed in churches during the festive season. This money was then distributed during to the poor and needy after Christmas.



Christmas Spice Cookies



INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- 2 cups molasses
- 1/2 cup butter
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 2 teaspoons ground ginger
- 4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 1/2 tablespoons baking soda
- 1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
- 2 teaspoons ground cloves

DIRECTIONS

Beat the sugar, molasses, butter or margarine, and oil together. Add 2 cups of the flour and the baking soda, cloves, ginger, and cinnamon. Mix in the remaining flour 1/2 cup at a time until the dough is stiff. Flatten into disks and cover with plastic wrap. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C).

On a lightly floured surface roll the dough out to 1/4 inch thick and use cookie cutters to cut into desired shapes. Place cookies on a baking sheet and bake at 350 degrees F (175 degrees C) for 8 minutes.



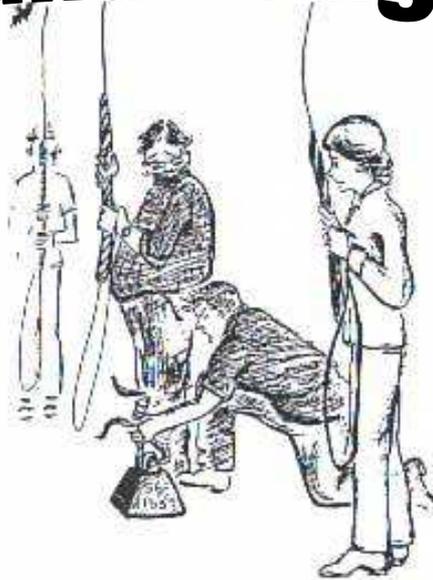
ANNUAL REPORT

Just a reminder to all Guild Officers and District Secretaries that the deadline for material for the Annual Report is Monday January 15, 2007. You can send it by post to The Willows, Low St, Bardwell, Bury St Edmunds IP31 1AS, or by email to bardwell.ruth@btopenworld.com. If you know of a practice night which has changed, a new Tower Correspondent, or perhaps an obituary which needs to be written – or indeed any other information - please contact either your District Secretary or myself. Thanks in advance to everyone who helps me with the Report.

Ruth Suggett



Guild Laughs



"I'M NOT HAVING YOU DRIFT OFF IN MY PEAL."

Have you heard the latest news about Sally and Bob?

Sally missed being single so is dodging Bob. And we all know that Bob misses his Sally and hates dodging with her. But what really gets me is the constant number of changes between the two!!

"The way he's going, anyone would think he's the Guild Chairman!"

Reply: "He is!"

For Sale

1 hot water boiler (urn), ideal for small church use of a belfry. It works well and has safety cert at the present. Only £20, money to the Guild Bell Fund.

Wilfred Wilson's Change Ringing book, hardly used. Only £7 for Guild Bell Fund, currently £14 new! Contact Sally Munning on 01473 743596

South East

Having had a successful monthly practice at Bredfield on the 4th November, the South East District sends its best wishes to Ann Pilgrim, who had an accident whilst collecting the church key. She broke her leg from a fall off her bicycle and will be in hospital until Christmas. Let's hope for a speedy recovery!

Sally Munnings (District Secretary)

WELL DONE!

To Craig Gradidge, for ringing at a wedding for the first time! Well Done!

To Louis Suggett for ringing his first peal of Double Norwich inside!

Update on The Folly (Claydon)

An Open Day was held at The Folly in August to give Guild members an opportunity to ring on Suffolk's latest mini-ring (8 bells, tenor 15 1/2 pounds). This was well attended, though mainly by NW District members. Members from the SE had another chance to try the bells following their September District meeting (see photograph). In fact, one or two people took the opportunity to ring a tenor for the first time!

Quarter peals of minor, triples and major have been rung, and on 22 October the first peal on the bells (Yorkshire Surprise) was rung, under the guidance of conductor Stephen Pettman.

We don't charge a rope fee but Guild members have been extremely generous in supporting our charity box and we would like to express our thanks. We have already passed on donations of £50 to both the Guild Restoration Fund (via the St. Edmunds Clapper competition) and to St. Nicholas Hospice (Bury), and we are well on the way to making further donations.

If you would like to try the bells out or bring a band for a quarter or for a peal, please contact Gordon on 01473 830313

Clockwise from ringer at front:

Ruth Jones, Felicity Brasier, Jenny Scase, Robert Scase, David Birkley, Angela Cable (hiding behind) Sally Munnings, Sue McCouaig



Open Churches Week

You may have read recently in the 'East Anglican,' the Revd Margaret Blackall, the Tourism Officer for the Diocese, is planning a county-wide project to open every parish church in the diocese to visitors for a week in July 2007. Margaret's ambition is that every church will be open through the day during the week of 15th – 21st July. She hopes that many parishes will take the opportunity to promote themselves and their activities. Having spoken with her, Margaret is particularly excited at the prospect of Suffolk's bell ringers taking part.

This could be an excellent chance for us to bring our art to the attention of the public at large. As well as putting on ringing demonstrations, we could mount displays and exhibitions of the history etc of bell ringing in our parishes, and we could even attract some well-needed recruits.

Think about it over the long winter months! And come up with some good ideas.

And remember the date: **15 July – 21 July 2007.**

Bruce Wakefield,
(Public Relations Officer for Suffolk Guild of Ringers)

St Peter's and St Mary's, Stowmarket

MONK WEEK 2007

In 2007, the Editor, Carl Melville, will be again living in church for one week to raise money for the extensive Restoration project. This will be taking place over **OPEN CHURCHES WEEK, Mon 16th-Sun 22nd July!**

Open Churches Week ideas...

- Hold an open tower day/night, inviting local ringers and your village!
- Hold a coffee morning in the church or tower
- Organise a sponsored quarter, or peal.
- Sleep in your church tower for a night to raise funds for the bells.
- Invite local press and radio to have a go at ringing.

The possibilities are endless!! Give it a go, and remember to send all your activities for this week to me so it can be publicised! CM

PEAL WEEK 2007

Next year, we're holding a Guild peal week from **Saturday, 10th, February to Sunday, 18th, February**, half-term week. Although peal ringing isn't everyone's cup of tea, especially on a regular basis, peals are a great opportunity to settle into and get right a method or methods.

Ideally, I would love to see lots of firsts - first peals, first as conductors, first inside, first on eight, ten or twelve, etc. But it is also a good chance to ring stuff we know and improve on our knowledge of methods and our striking. Importantly, it is time to stop viewing peals as an inconvenience and/or a waste of time and view them as the valuable teaching aide that they can be and frequently are.

Peals are a small part of the process of improving ringing in Suffolk, so that we can put up as good a show as possible, but it would be great to use this week as a chance to try new things and tattoo current knowledge on the mind, so that next time you go and ring, say Lincolnshire at a practice night or even more crucially on a Sunday morning, you know the method inside out.

If anyone would like more details on the peal week or would like me to arrange something for them, just call me on either 01394 384117 or 07886 808698 or drop me a line at richardmunnings@btinternet.com. I look forward to hearing from you.

Richard Munnings

From the Guild Chairman

Over the last few years the Guild has seen a remarkable increase in the number of major bell restorations. It is very unusual to attend a Belfry Advisory Meeting or Management Meeting which does not discuss at least one bell restoration. Recent Meetings have seen as many as four applications for grants all at the same Meeting. This is an excellent trend of course, and it would be wonderful to have all of our Suffolk peals of bells restored and in first class condition. Unfortunately, as with all things, there is a down side associated with more and more bells coming on line, and this is the ever present County wide shortage of ringers. I fear that the trend is adding fuel to those who suggest that perhaps we should all concentrate on making sure that there are enough ringers to ring the bells that we have now?

We have no doubt all been faced with the situation at Christmas, Easter, Remembrance Sunday and similar where a group of ringers who necessarily spread themselves round several towers, find that each of the Churches has a Service at the same time. The best that can be done is to ring at one, or possibly two Churches. The others have to remain silent. It begs the question that if one or more of the silent Churches has spent a great deal of money restoring their bell installation, is it not reasonable for them to expect their bells to be rung on Major Christian Festivals, especially as the restoration was most likely encouraged by ringers.

Clearly as a Guild we do all we can to assist with giving advice and support to Churches who wish to restore their bells. This will continue and it is one of the reasons for our Guild's existence. Where we are falling short is on the recruitment, and to some extent on the training aspects. There are those of us in Suffolk who work really hard, year in year out, to recruit, teach and hold on to new ringers. Those that do this are quite often reduced to the long term ringing of no more than call changes and bob doubles at best, but at least we are trying to keep our bells ringing on Sundays.

I believe that the time has come for the Suffolk Guild of Ringers to seriously consider the vital issue of recruitment. The Guild is shown as having a Recruitment and Training Committee. Very little has been shown to have been done by this Committee now for a number of years. When you equate this with the vast amount of time spent on restorations and grants, I suggest that it is high time that the resulting imbalance is redressed. I believe that the Guild Management Committee should be charged with setting up an efficient Restoration and Training Committee which should draw on the expertise of all those who can assist. The Guild Public Relations Officer should be a part of this Committee which should work through the Districts, press and other avenues to vigorously promote bell ringing at every possible opportunity. We must actively seek to set up an efficient, workable system which will urgently deal with the recruitment problems in Suffolk. I will ask the Guild Hon. Secretary to put this on the Agenda for the February Management Meeting.

Winston Girling

Richard Home Alone!

Unfortunately we can't all pop off to Australia. To give them their dues, my parents have worked hard and deserved their trip to the other side of the world for their eleven pages worth of holiday.

However, whilst they were off having fun ringing in Oz and meeting lots of people who know George Pipe (who needs to go Down Under for that?), I think it's important to recount the tales of those left behind...

The folks left in February, with the weather surprisingly cold and miserable for that time of year. Jealousy levels were at an all time high, particularly amongst those of us who still had to go to work. However, Bondi Beach had nothing on Felixstowe beach at 9am on a cold Tuesday morning, so I felt relatively smug.

Plans had been hatched to use their home in Ipswich as some sort of base for going on nights out in in Suffolk's capital (sorry to those in Bury!) and thoughts of unlimited access to Chez Ashcroft had excitedly taken over.

"I'd appreciate it if you didn't invite friends round or throw any parties whilst we're away," mother said.

"Of course," replied the future Ringing Master, crossing his fingers with all the responsibility that would mark him out for such high office in the coming months.

"So, with that in mind, I've left the keys with Vanessa the neighbour."

"D'oh," as the 20th century yellow philosopher of ancient Springfield would say.

Undeterred, we greeted the news of their arrival in Australia with delight that they had arrived safely - and that they couldn't do an awful lot from there.

The immediate revenge for such desertion was achieved through the medium of my answer-machine message that went

on longer than injury-time at Old Trafford. Most of their holiday money was gone just listening to the Richard Munnings call centre.

Perhaps their revenge for that was leaving me to cope with a dentist appointment without any moral support. Be warned boys and girls, these parents can be cunning folk.

The first Saturday of February arrived. Munnings Senior, the better looking and more charismatic of the brothers decided it was an ideal time to call Vanessa and borrow the keys so 'he could stop over on his own'. If you include inviting his mates Andy and Michaela to stay over as being on his own. The plan was to drop our stuff at the Munnings Palace after leaving my car at my mate Andy's in Wickham Market and head into Ipswich for a night out instead of having to take small mortgages out for a taxi trip back to Outer-Tunstall. Non of us were prepared for the sight that greeted us...

If any of you have seen the Simpsons episode where everyone's favourite family (apart from the Pipes) went to stop at the Flanders' holiday home will have some idea of the scene.

Somewhere behind the post-it notes were some walls, a bath and a new kitchen. "Do not alter heating." "Do not switch on this light." "Do not cook anything." And in capital letters, "DO NOT BRING ANYBODY ROUND!" Oops. However, the best was, "Do not have a bath." What, ever? Surely advice that went against everything me and Chris had been taught throughout our lives.

This initial shock overcome though, the intrepid party-goers went out, enjoyed themselves and returned, causing no visible damage. Although I was able to foresee my parents breaking the toilet flush on their return.

The next morning saw us heading off to Wickham to watch the mighty Tractor Boyz overcome their inferior neighbours from up the road with the finest winner since Brazil's second goal in the 1970 World Cup Final. All in the presence of the Norwich

fan. Sorry, A Norwich fan.

Glowing with smugness, I went to get my car keys and head off to a peal of Double Norwich Major at Grundisburgh. Except my car keys weren't there. They were in Ipswich. A quick phone call to Stephen Pettman saw my successful arrival, albeit a little late at the finest 12 this side of St Mary-le-Tower. I was in Grundisburgh, my car was in Wickham Market and my keys were in Ipswich. See what happens when my parents leave the country?

Having got our peal, I was able to negotiate a lift back to Ipswich and then to my car in Wickham. Day saved.

Over the following weeks, I was able to ring in another peal in Nottinghamshire and a failed attempt in Bedfordshire, but all this was eclipsed by my brother stalling his new Mini TWICE before getting out of his village. Priceless.

We managed to get drunk at the Henry Johnson Diner in Birmingham too, though that was always on the cards with or without the parents in the country. They would've been very proud of the large amounts of money we wasted on wine though.

Back in Suffolk, the South-East District was able to hold their events in Mum's absence, although it was far from the slick style in which we have become accustomed to without the Secretary's presence. Thanks have to go to those who managed in trying circumstances though.

All in all though, we've all been (genuinely) glad to see that they have had such a great time and to hear their stories and see their pictures only a handful of times.

In all seriousness, their absence did highlight how much they both put into ringing locally and across the county and they fully deserved their trip of a lifetime.

Richy Munnings

My first six months as Ringing Master

I have to be honest. I was slightly drunk when I agreed to be Ringing Master of the Suffolk Guild of Ringers. Perhaps if I had been sober I would have shown enough reservation to say; "Surely there's someone better...?" After all, with the names that have held this post surely little Richard Munnings, the kid from Sproughton can't join this illustrious list?

However, come the 22nd, April, that kid became Ringing Master and I have no regrets. It is an honour and I hope that I can do the role justice. However I need the help and co-operation of as many people as possible from across the guild to make any difference. Considering the size of membership in the Suffolk Guild, the turnout at meetings, outings and events both on a Guild and district level is pretty poor.

This is not necessarily a criticism. After all, there are distractions in modern day life. Many people work at weekends, kids have non-ringing mates with which it is difficult and indeed undesirable to fit bell ringing around. Football, going out, other sports, television, computer games, etc are alternatives to ringing.

They don't have to replace ringing altogether though. I myself go to watch Ipswich Town (someone has to) when I can. I go out drinking at weekends. I have many contacts and engagements outside of ringing, not all of which my parents agree with! But the point is that I still dedicate a large amount time to ringing and pretty much all of it fulfilling. Modern life doesn't have to replace ringing. We do need to make sure ringing is appealing though, especially to young people. This may mean cutting a lot of unnecessary debate and ranting in meetings or being more accepting of young people and their ways in the belfry. But if it succeeds in encouraging more young and new ringers to Guild and district events and thus ensuring they stick with the exercise than so be it.

That said though, there are encouraging signs. I have had the pleasure of attending the Young Ringers practices at Tostock and one of their outings since becoming Master and it's become clear that there are plenty of young enthusiastic ringers in the county and this energy has to be welcomed and used. These are the ringers that hopefully in a few years will be running and supporting the Guild.

The first six months of my role have been enormously satisfying, but there is a lot of work to be done as we enter 2007. We can't afford to carry on our old ways as this isn't really working. We need to be making sure that learners are grasping handling and striking before they carry on and that they are being encouraged to ring at other towers with other ringers and importantly going to district and Guild events. We also need to ensure that these events are more of a social thing than business or duty-bound thing so that more people are encouraged to come and support these occasions. Meetings need to be shorter and less picky - so long as the Guild is running and producing ringers to ring into the future, who cares if such and such rule is being adhered to? Keep it interesting!

As we approach this Christmas season, make sure you keep enjoying ringing, helping out where and when you can and attending the district and Guild events - things are getting better and hopefully more entertaining!

Meanwhile, I wish everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year and hope that your Christmas is as fulfilling as mine, laying on my parents sofa, being a little tipsy, stuffed and happily watching rubbish TV having helped produce decent well-struck ringing that morning at my local towers.

See you all at ringing next year!

Richy Munnings

Church Chuckles

The Sunday School teacher was telling the story of the nativity, and had just finished the part about there being “No room at the inn”. A small voice piped up, “I blame Joseph, he should have booked.”

At a school nativity play, three young children were cast as the kings. Presenting their gifts at the stable, the first said: “Gold”, the second: “Myrrh”, and the third: “And Frank sent this”.

A small boy went to church with his Grandma. Grandma knelt down to pray on entry and the little boy knelt beside her. After a few seconds had passed he said: “Who are you hiding from, Grandma?”

A bishop was astonished to hear a little girl say that you had to be brave to go to church. “Why do you say that?” he asked. “Well, I heard my uncle tell my aunt last Sunday that there was a canon in the pulpit, the choir murdered the anthem and the organist drowned the choir.”

Food, Glorious Food

WELSH RABBIT WITH BEER

Cheshire Cheese (about 8 ounces)
1 tablespoon of beer to each 2 oz cheese
Pepper & made mustard to taste

Stir continuously until cheese mixture thickens in pan
Add yolk of egg just before serving
(milk can be used instead of beer)
Serves 4 (or 1 american)

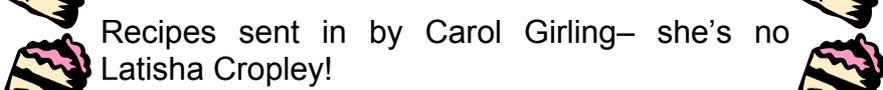
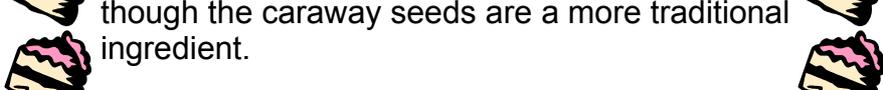
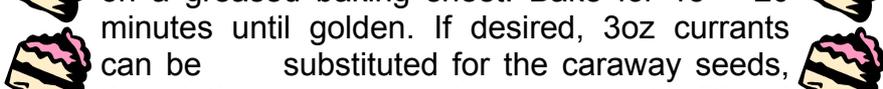
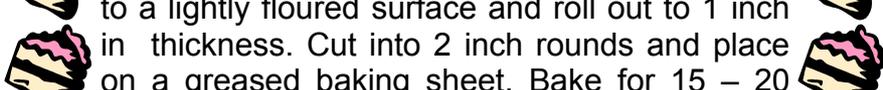
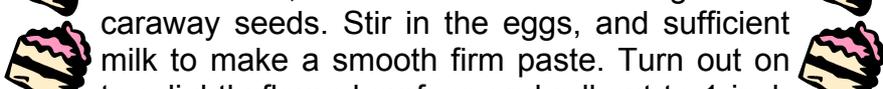
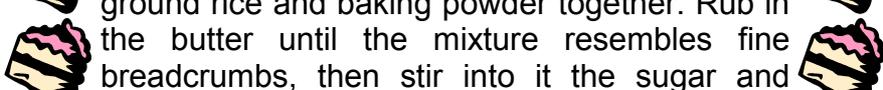
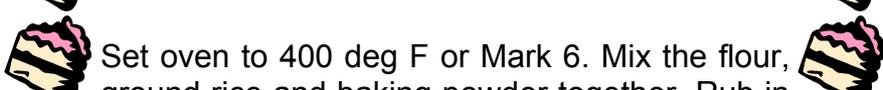
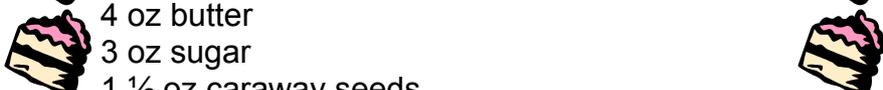
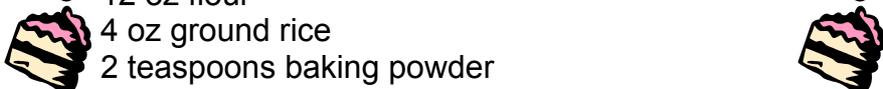
GLOUCESTER PANCAKE

6 oz flour
Pinch of salt
1 level teaspoon of baking powder
3 oz shredded suet
1 egg – beaten
A little milk
Lard for frying

Stir together the flour, salt and baking powder in a bowl then rub in the suet. Add the egg and sufficient milk to produce a stiff dough. Roll out on a lightly floured surface to about 1/2" thick, then cut into about 12 rounds, using a plain (not fluted) 2 inch cutter. Melt a little lard in a frying pan and fry the cakes until golden brown on both sides. Drain well and serve at once with warmed golden syrup or a lemon sauce. Makes about 12 cakes.



SUFFOLK BUNS



- 12 oz flour
- 4 oz ground rice
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 4 oz butter
- 3 oz sugar
- 1 ½ oz caraway seeds
- 2 eggs, beaten
- Milk

Set oven to 400 deg F or Mark 6. Mix the flour, ground rice and baking powder together. Rub in the butter until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs, then stir into it the sugar and caraway seeds. Stir in the eggs, and sufficient milk to make a smooth firm paste. Turn out on to a lightly floured surface and roll out to 1 inch in thickness. Cut into 2 inch rounds and place on a greased baking sheet. Bake for 15 – 20 minutes until golden. If desired, 3oz currants can be substituted for the caraway seeds, though the caraway seeds are a more traditional ingredient.

Recipes sent in by Carol Girling– she's no Latisha Cropley!

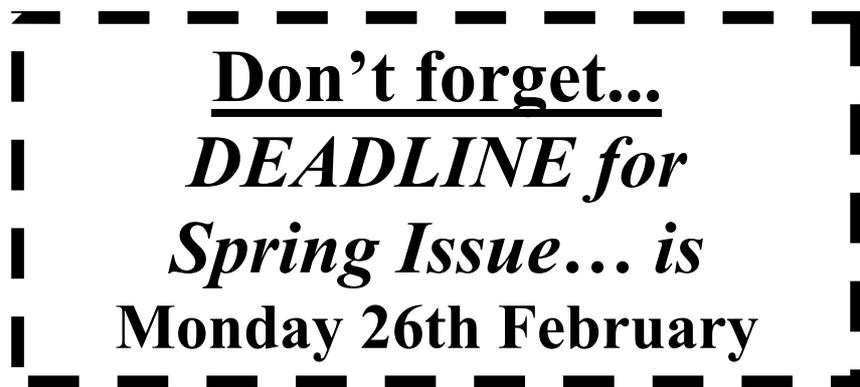


Sign outside a Birmingham Church on
November 18th...

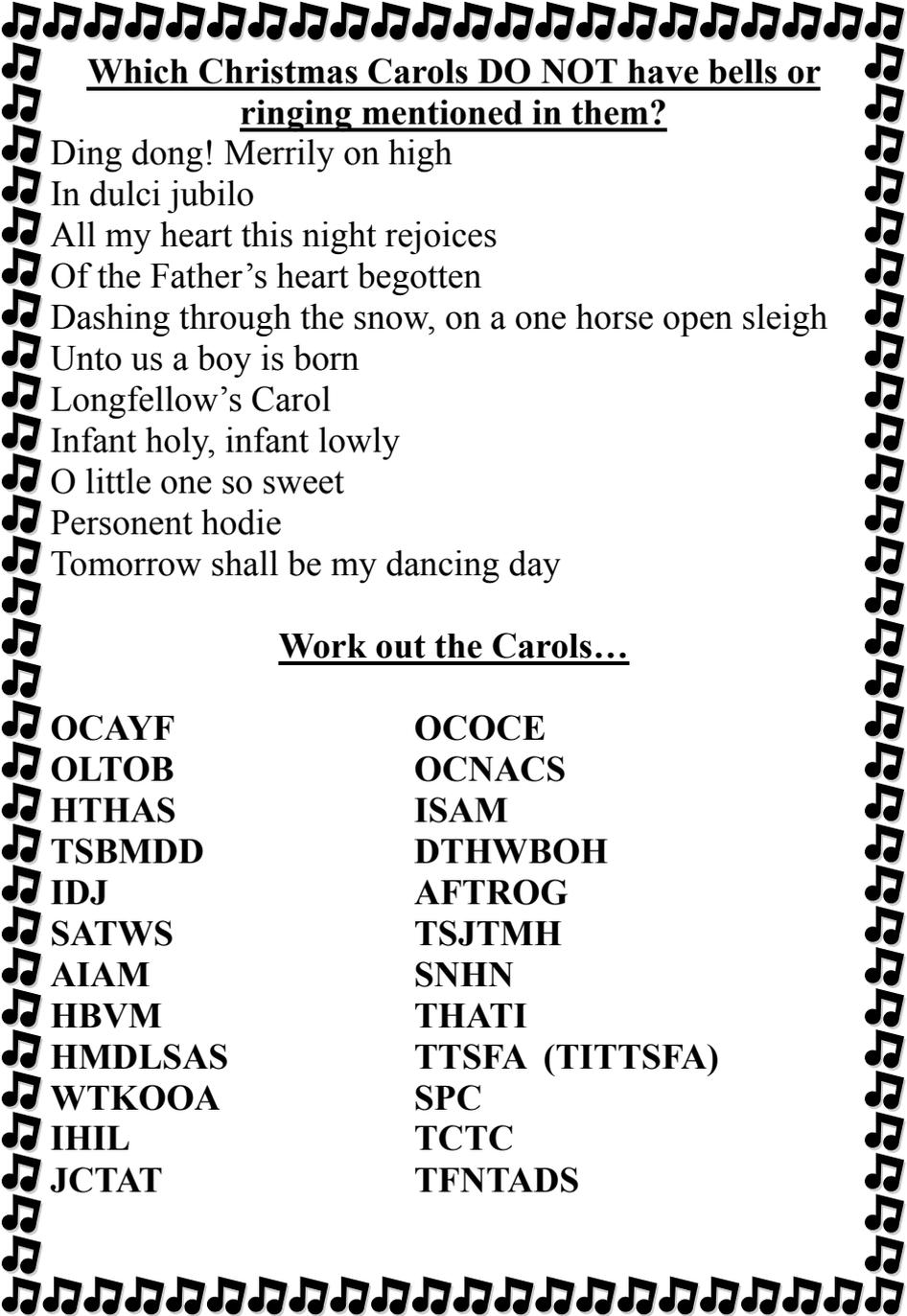
**Come this Sunday and
avoid the Christmas
rush!**

**“In the beginning was the Word, and the
Word was with God, and the word was God.
He was with God in the beginning. Through
Him all things were made; without Him
nothing was made that has been made. In
Him was life, and that life was the light of
me. The light shines in the darkness but the
darkness has not understood it.”**

John 1: 1-5



**Don't forget...
*DEADLINE for
Spring Issue... is
Monday 26th February***



Which Christmas Carols DO NOT have bells or ringing mentioned in them?

Ding dong! Merrily on high
In dulci jubilo
All my heart this night rejoices
Of the Father's heart begotten
Dashing through the snow, on a one horse open sleigh
Unto us a boy is born
Longfellow's Carol
Infant holy, infant lowly
O little one so sweet
Personent hodie
Tomorrow shall be my dancing day

Work out the Carols...

OAYF

OLTOB

HTHAS

TSBMDD

IDJ

SATWS

AIAM

HBVM

HMDLSAS

WTKOOA

IHIL

JCTAT

OCOCE

OCNACS

ISAM

DTHWBOH

AFTROG

TSJTMH

SNHN

THATI

TTSEFA (TITTSFA)

SPC

TCTC

TFNTADS

Ringling on the Isle of Wight

Previous ringing weeks organised by Mandy Shedden have been relatively local, moving over the border from Suffolk to Norfolk. This year Mandy became more ambitious and on a Monday morning in late July some 20 ringers from Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and beyond met up in Ryde on the Isle of Wight for an opportunity to ring at most of the towers and also enjoy the delights of the island.

As we hadn't rung together as a group, ringing at Ryde was a little cautious but Stedman was successfully brought round.

Then on to Newchurch and an opportunity for the 6-bell ringers in this delightfully well-cared-for church. Shanklin was then a bit of a contrast. These bells are not available in high winds but today was calm and we all tried our hands at this tricky ring hung in a two-tier wooden frame.

On Tuesday we tackled the excellent 10 bells of Carisbrooke. As the weather was again hot, shorts were the order of the day. One ringer who had filled his pocket with a large packet of sweets was saved from embarrassment as his rapidly descending shorts were hoisted back in to place by an alert young lady.

On to Arreton where good use was made of the recently restored bells whilst accompanying non-ringers visited the adjoining craft shops. Sociable refreshment was taken in the local before several ringers headed off for the beach and unsurpassed crab pasties.

Wednesday featured the attractive village and bells of Godshill before we tackled the 12 of Newport. After overcoming the

traffic in the island's hub Maurice coaxed the best out of our relatively inexperienced band with a very passable attempt at Grandsire Cinques. On to the easy-going bells of Brighstone where our time rushed by far too quickly. A picnic in a field close to the sea preceded a boat trip to see the Needles and the coloured sands of Alum Bay, whilst others inspected the Fort and Battery.

Thursday was our final day's ringing and we showed our repertoire on the somewhat loud bells at Whitwell before enjoying the bells at Niton and Chale. Then on to Shorwell where we expressed gratitude to the local steeple-keeper who had made sterling efforts to make the bells available to us following a broken slider which had threatened our visit.

Back to Niton for lunch taken by the whole party where thanks were expressed to Mandy for her thorough organisation, and advice on all aspects of enjoying our trip. Even the weather had been perfect with two thunderstorms offering late night entertainment rather than any inconvenience. Several ringers headed for a trip on the Steam Railway to the delight of Craig (Mandy's 12 yr old son) who had impressed us all with his progress and competence. It's a good indication of the success of a tour that we couldn't resist discussion of where to go next year. This one will take some beating!

Gordon Slack

Guild Training Day

It was with some trepidation that I approached Tostock church on the morning of the 16th of September. Apart from being the first training day that I had organised, the numbers of people had been decimated by weddings, holidays, ringing outings, College Youth peal day, etc. On top of this, the tenor clapper at Buxhall, one of the towers had intended to use, decided to break free in the week leading up to training day. I was pretty sure I had gathered a reasonable number of people, but still unsure as to whether it would be a success or not. I needn't have worried. Due to the generosity of time given over by people, even if they could only make a morning or afternoon, both courses were able to be of help.

At Wetherden in the morning, Brian Whiting, ably assisted by his glamorous assistant James Smith was able to impart the contents of their vast and talented experience in conducting, allowing the pupils to enjoy a long and concerted insight that they would usually be unable to have. Much theory and practice was applied to calling Doubles and seemed to help those present.

At the 'Fine-Tuning Technique and Striking Course', simultaneously being run at Tostock that morning, numbers were high, both with learners and pupils. The main problem with dealing people's techniques is that - a bit like driving - people pick up bad habits that are difficult to lose. Although I am far from the best person to improve peoples driving (ask my insurers), along with my mother Sally and the help of the many other helpers, I was confident that we could make some kind of difference. Many different techniques from single-bell ringing to highlight specific problems to dodging and treble-bob to help with changes of speed were used, keeping even the helpers on their toes, particularly those that had been up quite late the night before in Woodbridge and Bury - no names mentioned! Tea and biscuits helped though - thankyou

very much to the Tostock ringers for that.

If I thought I had it tough organising the training day, I soon realised how easy I had had it! A healthy number of us went to The Maypole in Wetherden to have a pint and a bite to eat - on the exact same day that the poor landlord had been let down by his chef! Instead of the easy beer-pulling for the locals he had been expecting, he was greeted by several hungry - and thirsty - bell ringers. He did sterling work, enabling us to satisfy our stomachs although sharing the four extra pints of IPA that I received off him was more work than I needed on my 'break' from Ringing Master duties!

Despite this unexpected overdose of Greene King, the afternoon sessions at Woolpit for the conductors course and Bacton for the fine-tuning course went very well, albeit a little shorter on numbers as people went off to ring for weddings and lose peals. Again, various techniques were used to try and help the willing pupils, many of which had travelled some distance. Both courses were surprisingly successful in view of the events it was competing, although these problems have led me to decide that a new date for next years training day is needed when it is less likely to clash with weddings, holidays, outings and so on.

Thanks have to go to those towers which allowed their bells to be used for a couple of hours at a time - especially Bacton which was called upon at very late notice after Buxhall's clapper problems. Thanks also need to go to those who helped out and offered their expertise on the day, without whom it would have been impossible to do anything really useful.

Handling, striking and conducting are probably the most important aspects of ringing, so it was great to be able to have a whole day dedicated to these. Hopefully we'll be able to cover these areas and more next year. It is important that ringing masters and teachers focus on these three areas as much as possible in between now and then.

Richard Munnings

THE RESTORATION OF THE PARHAM BELLS

Three American Flying Fortress veterans who flew from Parham airbase in Suffolk in World War II and had survived their daylight bombing of Europe came over for a week-end to participate in a Dedication Service for the restoration of the bells. The bell they had sponsored was cast in Loughborough and its inscription reads "*In memory of those who served with the 390th Bomb Group & Support Units at Parham Air Base during World War II*". A dozen of them were married to local girls in this church.

Four new bells from Taylors, one 17th Century bell, and two 13th Century bells were dedicated at a very special service on 2nd July. The service included prayers led by Canon Emeritus George Pipe, a special Anthem by our choir, and a Hymn which had been specially composed and written for the occasion. Our Rector The Revd. Harry Edwards, a Vice President of the Suffolk Guild, received a Book of Donors from the Chairman of our Bells Committee, and a Churchwarden handed over a mounted medieval clapper to the Tower Captain. We welcomed many notable ringers, and it all ended with refreshments and bubbly which lasted until late in the evening.

We believe that on that day we rang the newest and the oldest bells in Suffolk. We can date our two John of (Kings) Lynn bells to between 1280 and 1320, by their shape, the lettering in their inscriptions and the text of the inscriptions. These are "*VENI SPONSA MEA AD ORTUM MEUM*" ('*Come my spouse at my arising (giving birth?)*') the old treble of three at 4 Cwt 0 Qrs 22 Lbs.; and '*ASSUMPTA EST MARIA IN CELUM* ' ('*Mary is raised into heaven*'), the old second of three at 4 2 20.

The 15th century oak bell-frame has been left exactly as it was, with the new steel frame weaved in amongst it. We believe this is unique. Hayward Mills agreed to do this, they were the lowest tenderer, and the bells sound very well. The old second is listed so could not be tuned: it is not in tune with itself so it became the Service bell, but the debate about the clapping of the 4th (the old

Treble to which all the other bells have been tuned) went on for a while. The bell is a different shape to the new ones, longer and narrower, so the clapper moved more slowly than the others. Hayward Mills have written a learned paper on the subject, fitted a replacement clapper with different measurements, and the problem has now been solved.

How do you start to restore to full circle three very old Ellacombe struck bells hung dead in a listed 15th Century oak frame? The answer must be five years thoughtful work by a dedicated committee from the village, deciding what is wanted, consulting the PCC, consulting the village with rough costings and a convincing assurance that the tower won't fall down, and raising funds. In that order! After we had decided what was wanted (and received a local pump priming donation) we briefed a surveyor experienced in bells works (not our church architect) and he wrote detailed specifications for the building works. These included repair of the dangerously worn stone steps up the tower and fitting a handrail, installing electricity including emergency lighting, lime washing the crumbly flint walls (four coats), bonding the new steel frame into the lightning conductor etc. We checked on the stability of the prospective builders and went out to tender and there was a self evident winner. We invited quotations from three bell hangers (a fourth asked to tender and we agreed), and after some negotiation on specifications Hayward Mills were again the self evident winners. But we are grateful to Whitechapel, Nicholson Engineering, and Earyre and Smith for quoting.

When we knew what we wanted to do we began raising funds. We had started work planning the project in 2001, and had a year's break at the request of the PCC to allow them to raise funds for decorating the nave. We were fairly close to achieving our funding target by early 2005.

But were we close enough to sign binding contracts? If we weren't we would have to wait another year to accommodate the Natterers bats who would be breeding in the ringing chamber. Money came in in the nick of time and we went ahead. The money kept coming and has only recently stopped. We have now exceeded our target of £75,000, and have a small reserve.

We had wonderful local support in voluntary labour, accommodation, food for the workers and so on, which kept the bell hanger's prices down; and the Suffolk Guild has been a great support. The work has a long tail, and all is not yet entirely wound up. But the Parham Band is progressing well (concentrating on Plain Hunt this week!) and we should have few significant problems left.

Finally it may be of interest to readers to know how the money was raised. When we consulted the PCC we said that it would cost them nothing. We became a Committee of the PCC (and thus an insured charity) and kept them informed. We consulted the village at an open meeting (after a structural surveyor had assured us that the tower would not fall down), and we said we would give donations back if the project did not materialise. We gave receipts and thanks to all who donated, however little. We raised some £30,000 from sponsorships of bells, wheels, bosses etc; something under £30,000 from grants; £8,000 from events; £8,000 from Gift Aid; and £2,500 from Building Society interest.

Making it happen is not difficult: all you need is a good committee and an enthusiastic prime mover who is prepared to put in the time. We had problems and complaints, but these were handled one at a time and the end result makes it well worth it.

You will be very welcome indeed to join us for our Practice nights from 7.30 pm to 9 pm on the first, third and fifth Wednesdays of every month (except Holy Week) or at Sunday services. If you like do telephone Simon Cottrell first on (01728) 723309 to introduce yourself.