

District Chairman's report 2023

I feel it is fair to say it has been a little different from normal for the district, thankfully in a positive way.

In May we had King Charles coronation, which was commemorated by many ringers in the district, through peals, quarter peals and other organised pieces of ringing. It also incentivised several people to take up ringing.

Then in September we hosted the Central Council, alongside which several learning sessions were organised, specifically for members of the Guild. I would like to thank the organising committee for all the work they did to make this so successful and especially to Katharine Salter for taking the lead. Feedback from several people I have spoken to has been very positive.

Over the year, the attendance at our district meetings has been good, with the unfortunate exception of the planned mini centenary celebration, which had to be cancelled due to low numbers. We hope to reschedule something similar at a time when less people are on holiday.

I am pleased to note that more towers in the district have restarted regular ringing, including weekly practices. There has also been an increase in the number of peals and quarter peals rung in Guild, many involving district members.

This year has seen a significant influx of new members to the district. Currently there have been 32 new members, 8 of whom are young ringers. Most of these have only recently learnt to ring and I would like to thank all of those who have been involved in teaching both them and the many others who are expected to join the Guild soon.

At the start of the year, Rowan, the previous Guild Chairman, introduced Centenary Achievement certificates. This has since been extended and in addition there will be Achievement/Recognition certificates at a district level.

As we near the end of the year, could I please ask that anyone who still hasn't paid their subscription this year, to do so ASAP.

In closing, I would like to thank all the district officers and area representatives who have given freely of their time over the year.

Mark Ogden
Chairman, SE District, Suffolk Guild of Ringers

SE District Ringing Master's Report 2023

We began the year by holding the January district practice at Henley. It was fantastic to see over 50 people in attendance. I found it challenging to ensure everyone had a chance to have a good go at ringing and was aware not everyone did! A chance to socialise and enjoy a cup of coffee hopefully made up for any lack of ringing.

February is becoming established as our 'Bake off' month. This year 15 savoury contributions were enjoyed by the 40+ ringers in attendance. Jonathan's delicious sausage rolls were voted the winning entry. We did plenty of ringing as well! As usual this ranged from rounds to surprise minor.

In March we were warmly welcomed by the local band as we visited St Mary le Tower in Ipswich. It is particularly important to have the support of experienced ringers when ringing on 12 bells. With over 50 ringers present, several of whom were ringing on 10 or 12 bells for the first time, I was grateful for that

experienced help. We rang lots of rounds on 10 or 12 bells but also rang Grandsire and Stedman cinquies and Little Bob Maximus. The refreshments provided afterwards were much appreciated.

In April over 30 ringers enjoyed an evening practice at Barking. Again lots of ringing at all levels giving people the chance to progress and consolidate their ringing skills.

No district event was held in May due to the King's Coronation being on the same day. The coronation meant we were all (well most of you. I was languishing in hospital!) very busy making sure almost all the ringable bells in our district, were rung in celebration. Thanks must go to everyone who took part in this rare national event. Bellringing was again an integral part of community celebrations and well received by the general public.

The striking competition this year was held in June, at Barham. Glorious sunshine in a super setting with good facilities helped to make this a very enjoyable afternoon. 12 teams took part with Hollesley winning the call change trophy and Debenham and Pettistree jointly winning the method competition. However I think what I found most pleasing was the large number of ringers, at least 20, taking part in their first striking competition. Rightly, many are seeing taking part as a useful and important part of developing their ringing skills. Not everyone enjoys the competitive part of ringing and that's OK, but I think, as important as the competition is, is the practice that teams do in advance of the day. For six ringers to practice a piece of ringing with the particular focus of concentrating on striking, can be invaluable in improving confidence and team building, as well as striking.

July found us in the beautiful countryside around Brandeston and Kettleburgh where we enjoyed walking between the churches in these two villages, ringing on each of their light, easy going sets of bells. As is usual over the summer months fewer ringers attended but there were enough of us to enable a good range of ringing. An advantage of fewer ringers is the opportunity for individuals to have lots of goes and consequently show excellent progress.

Unfortunately the district August afternoon tea event, in celebration of the Guild's centenary, had to be cancelled. However a quarter peal was rung by those who had expressed an interest in ringing on that day.

I hope in September lots of district members were able to take part in the events put on by the Central Council when they visited Ipswich for their AGM. I know several who have benefitted from going on one of the ringing development sessions. I found the Ringing2030 presentation by outgoing CC President, Simon Linford, interesting and thought provoking. At the end of September a SE district band won the Rose trophy in the Guild 8 bell striking competition. Congratulations to those who rang.

In October we met at Earl Soham for a morning practice. We had an enjoyable ring with a reasonable number of members although fewer than sometimes.

In the days before our November district outing, I was having second thoughts about organising it in the Waveney valley! Parts of Suffolk and Norfolk were still recovering from the worst flooding seen in most people's living memory. In fact would I even be able to get out of Debenham? It was wet and some ringers were late arriving, having had to change routes to avoid floods, but we ended up having an enjoyable day. We rang at Brockdish, Pulham Market and Redenhall in Norfolk before our lunch at Homersfield Black Swan. Back over the border in Suffolk, we rang at Menham, Metfield and Laxfield. A crowd of around twenty joined for at least part of the day.

Looking back over the year, in terms of district events, the lack of an event in May, August (cancellation) and September meant fewer opportunities to ring and socialise together as a district. January, March, April and October were the only 'ordinary' district practices.

At the end of last year's report I noted that a good start had been made on rising to the challenges of ringing recovery and growth, following the global pandemic. Within our district, it is really pleasing to see how many new members have been elected to the Guild this year. This indicates a continuation of recovery and growth. There are pockets of towers where a lot of teaching is going on and where groups of churches are working together to keep bells ringing. This is excellent but we have to continue to teach, motivate and challenge all who have the desire and ability to progress to their next level, whether that be, to become a future ringing teacher, to ring at the highest level or to be a sound, reliable local ringer. All are welcome and

needed if ringing is to thrive. Thank you to all you wonderful teachers who are doing a fantastic job. And thank you to all of you, whatever your contribution, for all you do to support ringing and this district.

If I am elected at the ADM to be Ringing master for another year, it will be my last year in the role, so please give thought to a replacement.

Jenny Scase
SE District Ringing Master

Suffolk Guild of Ringers – Southeast District Belfry Advisory Committee report 2023

The committee has met on three occasions during the year and minutes from those meetings are posted on the guild web site. Grant applications that have been discussed and passed to management for endorsement include Blythburgh, Stowmarket, Coombs, Westhorpe and Fornham St Martin.

The committee has been very active during the year frequently supported by other guild members. Work or Inspections has been undertaken at the following churches – Bramford, Copdock (new frame), Framsdon, Barham, Framlingham, Gosbeck, Burstall, Hemingstone, Campe Ash, Wickham Market, Tuddenham St Martin and Otley. This is just SE district work; similar activities have taken place right across the county by B.A.C.

Many tens of hours of volunteer work (B.A.C) have been put in at Stowmarket installing the new ten-bell ring together with ongoing work at Fornham St Martin. Assistance has been provided at St Peters Sudbury prior to the reopening of the church as an arts venue. Ten bells can now be rung again by arrangement.

The BAC with assistance from professional bellhangers has posted on guild web site health and safety guidelines specifically in respect of working on bells. These are to be followed when working on any bells and are a much-needed enhancement, initiated following bellwork incidents. Previously no such documentation existed and will be expected by our insurers.

A new peal of bells is being planned at Framlingham College public school, as a small tower is part of the Victorian college chapel. An interesting project but unlikely to start in the immediate future, although they have been in discussions with us.

We are happy to help with projects during 2024 and several of them now planned are very likely to be started within the next eighteen months, with our support.

Christopher I McArthur – District Technical Advisor and BAC Secretary.