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Hertfordshire Young Ringers' Outing by Tom Mack

Left to right –standing: Emma, Dominic, Miriam, Tom, Mark, Louise, Ed, Helen, William, Laurence, Geoffrey, Jonti, Andy, Alexander; kneeling: Benedict, Mary, Katharine and Katherine

Following Hertfordshire's success in the inaugural Ringing World National Youth Contest, it was agreed that there should be some sort of get-together this summer in order to help sustain a group of young ringers in the area. As in March, Ed Mack ably stood up to the task of organisation. Indeed, Wednesday 31st August saw 18 young ringers from Hertfordshire, 1 young ringer from Bedfordshire, and 2 mums descend on south-east Bedfordshire for our first official young ringers' outing!

South-east Bedfordshire was chosen due to its dense population of light and mid-weight eights, ideal for a group of young ringers of mixed ability. This gave us the opportunity to have some good ringing, help people progress in a relaxed environment, and to give people the chance to ring on different bells in the circle. We visited five towers in all; Ampthill, Maulden, Campton, Clifton and Henlow. Each provided us with a slightly different challenge, such as the heavier weight of the bells at Henlow, or/and the clarity of the bells

at Ampthill, which ensured that close attention was paid to striking. Methods ranged from rounds and call-changes up to three leads of Bristol Surprise Major, with most standard stuff in-between. Many people were clearly eager to grab the opportunity to ring something new, or to ring something that perhaps they rarely get the chance to practise at their local tower. Others were content simply to enjoy the day without any pressure! All things considered, the general standard of ringing was very creditable.

A suitably long pub lunch at the Jolly Coopers in Flitton was central to the day's proceedings. Initially, the advanced party were asked the blunt question, 'you will be sitting outside, won't you?!



Thankfully, the weather was distinctly summery and we were only too happy to oblige. Once the landlady realised we were most definitely not your stereotypical teenagers, all was well. The food was plentiful and reasonably priced, served in excellent time for such a large group. Some decent banter ensued, with the photography in the facilities a notable topic of conversation. Maybe we were a group of stereotypical teenagers?! Apart from allowing people the time to imbibe in the odd pint or two (for those who were of age and not driving!), this was a time for people to catch up and make friends with other young ringers close to home, a key aim of the day.

All in all, the outing was a roaring success. The wonders of Facebook and email made it relatively easy to organise, and for it to be publicised to as many young ringers in Hertfordshire as possible. I will be the first to admit, that before a Facebook group was set up I was not aware quite how many young ringers there are in Hertfordshire, a healthy sign for the exercise in the area. Due to the success of this event, a second outing is currently in the pipeline, being organised for the 21st December.

A Quick Review of St Albans District in 2011

In January this year (AGM postponed from December due to snow) there was a huge silence when the post of Secretary was called for and eventually Claire took the noble step and volunteered.

Perhaps the best attended event was the Quiz Night in March when we had seven (or was it eight?) tables.

2011 was not a particularly good year for Striking Competitions for the St Albans District. In May the Woolford Cup Striking Competition was held at Sandridge and the District struggled to raise four teams from 20 towers in the District – and two of those were from St Peters!

– 20 years ago we had 7 or 8 teams entering the Woolford Cup Striking competitions

A month later the District came 2nd last in the Coburn Trophy (County 8-Bell competition)* but at the Kimpton Cup in September the Abbey and St Peters' came 3rd and 4th respectively.

The Summer School at Essendon, Kimpton and Welwyn seemed to work quite well and many learners benefited from the support of other ringers and negotiated their first attempts at plain hunting and Plain Bob.

We have a meeting nominally once a month (3rd Saturday of the month) and whilst some meetings were poorly attended, the turn out at the Abbey in September was good – perhaps because many had not at that time rang on the marvellous new 12.

The St Albans District Outing was organised by Richard Sales and they visited towers in the St Neots area.

What do you want from the District?

As 2011 comes to a close, it is time to think about the future of our District and how we are going to progress into 2012 and beyond.

The St Albans District in its current format dates from Victorian times and the question should be asked – Is this District still the right format for the 21st century?

Comments would be welcome – especially at the forthcoming meeting at Harpenden.

NEXT DISTRICT MEETING.

The next District Meeting is at Harpenden 3.30pm – 8.30pm on Saturday 17th for Ringing, Carol Service, Tea and Nomination Meeting.

Everyone is welcome and we especially want suggestions for the District Diary for 2012.

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