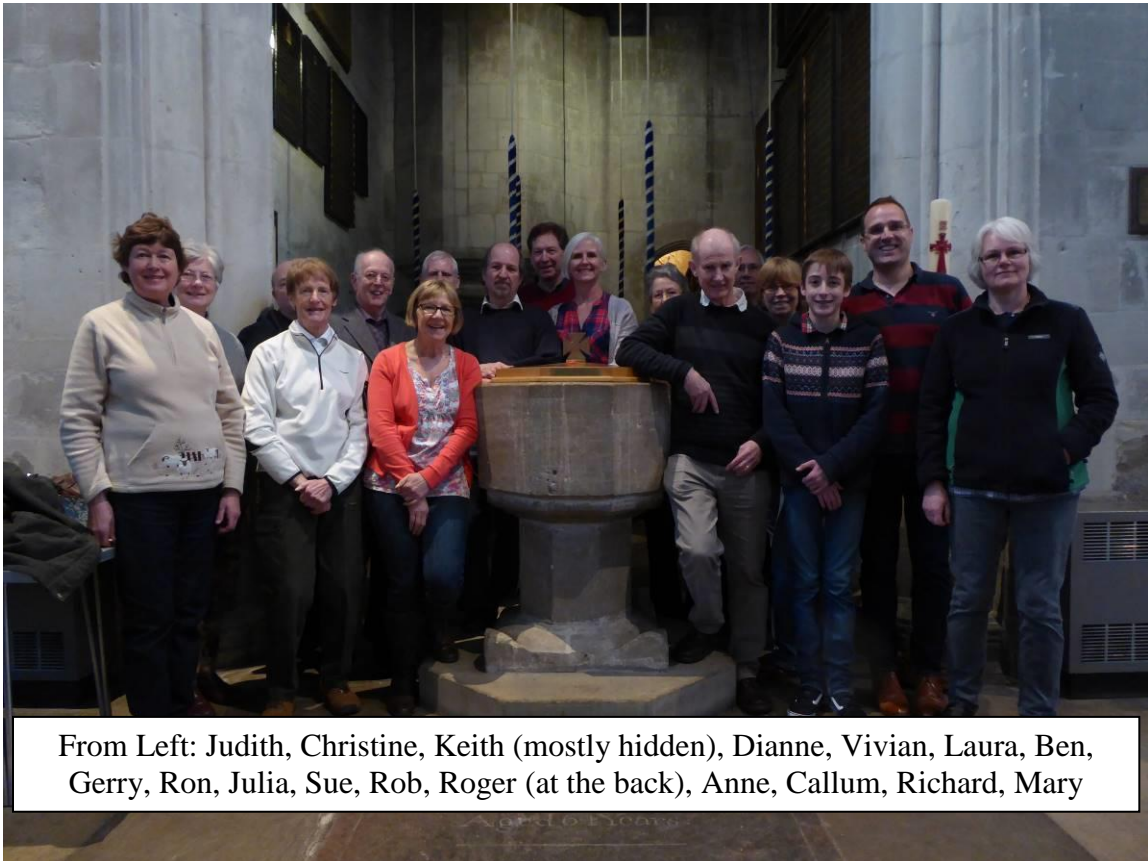


St Albans District Newsletter

Volume 22 Issue 1 – April 2017

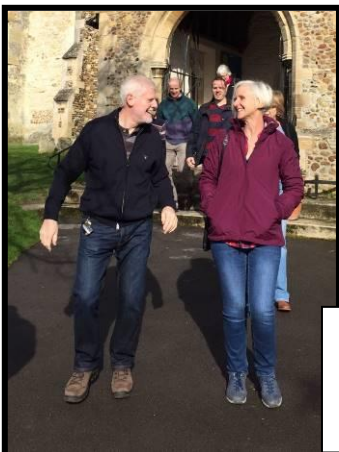
Combined Tower Outing

By Callum Hayes aged 15 (Sandridge)

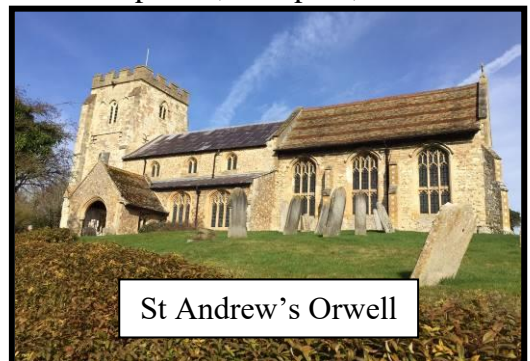


From Left: Judith, Christine, Keith (mostly hidden), Dianne, Vivian, Laura, Ben, Gerry, Ron, Julia, Sue, Rob, Roger (at the back), Anne, Callum, Richard, Mary

On Saturday 4th of March 17 ringers from Sandridge, Wheathampstead, Kimpton, Lemsford and Hatfield went on an outing to the Cambridge area. We rang methods and call changes at six towers around Cambridgeshire across just over seven hours. We had lots of fun ringing a multitude of methods, including Bob Doubles and Grandsire Doubles on both six and eight bells with covers, Grandsire Triples and Bob Triples, Cambridge Major and Minor along with some plain hunting.



Ben and Julia
sharing a joke
at Orwell



St Andrew's Orwell

The first tower was St Andrew's, Orwell, with an exciting ring of eight bells.

At the second tower, Holy Trinity in Meldreth, we enjoyed tea, coffee and delicious cakes provided by Laura.

Judith, Keith, Roger, Christine and Anne
enjoying Laura's cakes at Meldreth



After All Saints, Harston, we ate a very tasty lunch at the appropriately named 'Six Bells' in Fulbourn, followed by ringing only a short walk away at St Vigor.

I thoroughly enjoyed St Mary in Swaffham Bulbeck, which was followed by the final ring of the day at St Andrew, Chesterton. This final tower had a much heavier set of bells, which sounded wonderful, but were, by far, the most challenging and tiring bells of the day. I was sad to know that it would be fourteen whole hours before I could ring again.



The sun streaming through
at Swaffham Bulbeck

I really enjoyed the experience of ringing at different towers and the opportunity to ring on different numbers of bells. I feel that my ringing has really improved as a result. The chance to ring alongside experienced ringers from other towers was something that I had never had before and I feel that their input and encouragement made a great improvement to my ringing.



Ringling up the tenor at
Chesterton

Many thanks to Laura for her brilliant organisation of the day.

A Treat at the Bull Inn

August 29th 1863

Susan L'Estrange came across this report from the Herts Advertiser from more than 150 years ago. They clearly knew how to show their appreciation for ringers in those days!

WHEATHAMSTEAD

THE RINGERS OF WHEATHAMSTEAD had an excellent repast given them by R.B. Baxendale, Esq. at the Bull Inn, prepared by my hostess, Miss Elizabeth Hooper, on Thursday evening the 27th inst., for their great improvement of late in the art of bell ringing. We are happy to add that there is now a complete set of ringers, and that we often hear with considerable pleasure a merry peal rung out upon these hitherto neglected bells, which certainly for brilliancy of tone possess musical powers that all must admire if they are lovers of music.

Learning the Ropes

By Vivienne Neale (Hatfield)



When I moved to Hatfield I was delighted to hear the bells as it seemed to somehow say that 'all is well'. Therefore when I read about a call to arms in the Church 'Refocused' magazine I thought this may well be the time I became a campanologist. How hard could it be? What's so technical about bell ringing?

That was in December last year and I'd like to answer my own question: 'Erm, very hard indeed.' But I always think it's the challenging things in life that are more interesting and ultimately most rewarding. What is so difficult you might be thinking? You pull a rope and the bell makes a sound. In theory that's absolutely correct. However in practice the physics of the activity has quite a lot to do with just what happens when you get on the end of the rope.

But don't let that put you off.

To be part of a tradition that goes back centuries is really special. To know every single person who has become a bell ringer will have experienced the same stresses is part of the fun. I was also lucky enough to add my name to the visitor's book which goes back to 1936, coincidentally the year my own father was born. Having done that I felt there was nothing for it but to stick to the course and five months on I am still practicing.



At St Etheldreda's Church there are 10 bells in the tower. Most Sundays and Thursdays you will only hear six ringing as we have an insufficient number of experienced and competent ringers. In fact did you know the Eight Bells pub at the bottom of the hill should really be called the Ten Bells? In 1929, two trebles were added by Lord Salisbury in memory of his nephew Rupert Edward Gascoyne Cecil who was killed at Ypres in 1915. One of the stories go that the Rector at the time refused to allow the pub to be renamed because it was not a 'church pub'. In any event the pub has never quite caught up with this augmentation to ten bells and has stubbornly remained 'The Eight Bells'.

Certainly the band are very friendly and welcoming. Everyone has passed through the 'I won't ever get the hang of this!' stage and is always

helpful and understanding. Currently we do have three beginners at the moment (including me) trying to learn the ropes and we're getting to the stage where some more ringers around us will help us progress. So if you are free then do think about coming along to a practice one Thursday night beginning at 8pm and helping us out.

Kimpton Mini Outing

By Rob Goss

Keith Lewin arranged a morning's ringing in South Cambridgeshire for April Fool's Day. The first tower was the odd-struck five at Great Chishill. These took a little while to get used to but by the end of our allotted 30 minutes, we achieved some respectable striking.

A mile down the road was Heydon – another 5-bell tower. The ropes are quite close together and somehow Dianne's rope (the treble) came a bit too close to Alan's (ringing the 2nd) and the end result was that Alan ended up with a nasty rope burn.

Thriplow were the best bells of the morning - a lovely 6 cwt six with the ropes in the chancel crossing.

At the last tower Whittlesford, we were met by a very enthusiastic local who was tidying up the churchyard with fellow parishioners and we rang a good selection of methods on these slow turning bells (13 cwt).

A splendid pie'n'pint at the pub in Duxford rounded off an enjoyable morning in the spring sunshine.



Publicity

You may have seen this article in the *Welwyn Hatfield Times* on 22 March:

Wednesday March 22, 2017 | www.whtimes.co.uk

Appeal for more volunteers to keep the bells a-ringing at Medieval church

ALEX LEWIS
alex.lewis@whtimes.co.uk

Hatfield's oldest church, the partly Medieval St Etheldreda's, has renewed the sound of its bells in a restoration project.

The church's ringing team removed the clappers from the six lightest of the bells, and sent them to a specialist restoration company in Oxfordshire.

Whitney Neale, who is learning to ring at the church, said: "It was left to our intrepid band of bell-ringers to climb up into the tower, clamber over the bells and start the process of removing them for repair."

"The clappers are very heavy, each weighing about 25 kilograms. The tower is a long way up, especially when they need to be carried down to ground level, but with some willing hands perched on the steep spiral staircase, we managed to pass them down without incident."

Once the clappers were removed, at a cost of £800, they were reattached by the ringers - a delicate operation in the cramped bell tower.

The ringing team has also appealed for help to keep the traditional custom of worship thriving in the town.

Rob Goss, deputy news editor at the WHT, the local paper, said: "The bells had a unique appeal, but the town needs to keep them."

He said: "At the moment we are short of six ringers. We have three left."

"It is a very unusual hobby. It is different. It is not just pulling on a rope."

"All sorts of people ring bells. I am a church organist, but we have people from all walks of life."

The St Etheldreda's bells make up one of the best sets in the county, the tower standing at St Etheldreda's Church, said Mr Goss. It is made of stone and requires much more skill than physical strength.

He said: "Once you have got the bell going round, it takes some of the hardest strength in the world to stop it. There is a lot of technique."

A beginner takes about six months to learn to handle a bell, but then embarks on the real challenge - change ringing.

The simplest change is "rounds" (the circle high to lowest sequence) are called out by the leader - "four to five" or "three to two", for example, but that is child's play for an experienced ringer like Rob.

Ringers learn sequences such as the relatively simple Plain Bob, up to more sophisticated challenges like Cambridge

Search strength in climbing a bicycle on the level. There is a lot of technique."

These involve hundreds of changes over half an hour or more, requiring eventually to become with pleasing mathematical symmetry.

According to Rob, bell-ringing is very social, with many regular visits to other Hertfordshire churches, topped by the challenge of ringing the 13-towered St Albans Cathedral.

St Etheldreda's is far from the only church with traditional bells in Welwyn Hatfield, with Rob quickly pointing off Lemsford, St Mary's in Welwyn, Knebworth, and North Mymms, with South Mimms, Ridge, Potters, Elstree, and Datchworth lying just across the borough's borders.

Every summer, the Hatfield team enjoys a two or three-day trip to another area, such as south Cambridgeshire, just prior to most ringers at other churches and try their bells.

And whenever they go on holiday, Rob and his wife Mary go to know the local ringers, meet recently to York and the Isle of Man.

He said: "Wherever you go, you know you are a ringers' people make you very welcome."

The Hatfield ringing team at St Etheldreda's Church tower.

I sent a note to the **WHT** about the repair of our clappers and Alex Lewis (who once learnt to ring at Lemsford) at the newspaper asked for more details and interviewed me over the telephone. The script (reproduced by kind permission of Alex at the **WHT**) reads as follows:

Hatfield's oldest church, the partly Medieval St Etheldreda's has renewed the sound of its bells in a restoration project.

The church's ringing team removed the clappers from the six lightest of the bells, and sent them to a specialist restoration company in Oxfordshire. Vivienne Neale, who is learning to ring at the church, said "It was left to our intrepid band of bell-ringers to climb up into the tower, clamber over the bells and start the process of removing them for repair.

“The clappers are very heavy, each weighing about 25 kilogrammes. The tower is a long way up especially when they have to be carried down to street level, but with some willing hands positioned on the steep spiral staircase, we managed to pass them down without mishap.”

Once the clappers were restored, at a cost of £600, they were reattached by the ringers – a delicate operation in the cramped bell tower. The ringing team has also appealed for help to keep the traditional summons to worship thriving in the town. Rob Goss, deputy tower captain at St Etheldreda’s Church told *WHT* the hobby had a unique appeal, but the team needs recruits.

He said “At the moment we are short of ringers. We have three learners.

“It is a very unusual hobby. It is different. It is not just pulling on a rope. All sorts of people ring bells, I am a Chartered Engineer, but we have people from all walks of life”

The 10 St Etheldreda’s bells make up some of the heaviest in the county, the tenor weighing a hefty 23 hundredweight. But Mr Goss (62) insists ringing requires much more skill than physical strength. He said “Once you have got the bell going round, it takes about as much strength as riding a bicycle on the level. There is a lot of technique.

A beginner takes about six months to learn to handle a bell but then embarks on the real challenge – change ringing. The simplest changes to “Rounds” (the crude high to lowest sequence) are called out by the leader – “four to five” or “three to two” for example but this is child’s play for an experienced ringer like Rob. Ringers learn sequences such as the relatively simple Plain Bob up to more sophisticated challenges like Cambridge Surprise Minor. These involve hundreds of changes over half an hour or more, eventually returning to Rounds with pleasing mathematical symmetry. According to Rob, bellringing is very sociable with teams enjoying regular visits to other Hertfordshire churches, topped by the 12-strong set at St Albans Cathedral.

St Etheldreda’s is far from the only church with traditional bells in Welwyn Hatfield, with Rob quickly reeling off Lemsford, St Mary’s Welwyn, Essendon and North Mymms, with South Mimms, Ridge, Tewin, Kimpton and Datchworth lying just across the borough’s borders.

And whenever they go on holiday in the UK, they go and join the local ringers.

He said “wherever you go, once you know they are a ringer people make you very welcome”.

Young @ Herts

By Jennifer Johnson

Hertfordshire hosted the 2nd South East England Youth Striking Contest (SEECN), at Kings Langley on Saturday 1st April. Six teams entered, from Essex, Kent, Guildford DG, Sussex, and Herts.

The Judges were Tom and Ed Mack.

Young@Herts team was:

- 1) Ella (Bishops Stortford)
- 2) Ollie (Rickmansworth - Captain)
- 3) Euan (Rickmansworth)
- 4) Daniel (Cheshunt)
- 5) Ed (Aldenhams)
- 6) Daniel (Tring)
- 7) Oli (C) (Aldenhams)
- 8) Ashley (Great Amwell)



The draw and the presentation were done by president, Mark Hall.

Young@Herts were placed 3rd, but scores were very close between 2nd and 3rd.

The results were:

1. Sussex Young Ringers
2. Young Sussex Ringers
3. Young@Herts
4. Kent Young Ringers
5. Essex Young Eagles
6. Guildford Young Ringers

Very good day, enjoyed by all (except perhaps a girl from Kent, who slipped in the churchyard, and broke her wrist, resulting in visits to Hemel hospital, Watford hospital, and apparently two more hospitals before the day was over!).

Contest next year will be in Sussex, probably at Warnham.

Editor Rob Goss
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