

St Albans District Newsletter

Volume 28 Issue 1 – February 2023

The Debenham Bell Fund Changes Its Rules

By Alison Evans (Secretary and Treasurer of the Debenham Bell Fund)

Have you heard of the Debenham Bell Fund? It's a resource available to all of the 20 towers in the HCACR St Albans District, from which grants can be made towards the cost of repair, purchase, maintenance or renewal of bells, fittings, ropes or related church fabric. In recent years, there have been some concerns about whether the fund was being put to best use and, as a result, the matter was referred for consideration by the District Committee.



The Committee felt it is valuable for the District to have its own bell fund but proposed that changes could be made to the process for approving grants which would allow them to be made more quickly and efficiently. At the fund's recent AGM, it was agreed that the trustees should be given authority to make grants up to the value of £1,000 without calling a meeting to seek approval from the members, and the rules of the fund have been changed to reflect this.

If the project is a large one, a grant may nevertheless be possible but amounts of more than £1000 are subject to approval by the members. Alternatively or in addition, applications can be made to the HCACR Bell Restoration Fund.

If your tower is having some work done and would like to apply for a grant from the Debenham Bell Fund, please get in touch with me: my email address is alison.evans@btinternet.com . The fund cannot necessarily cover the full cost of the work but we can often help.

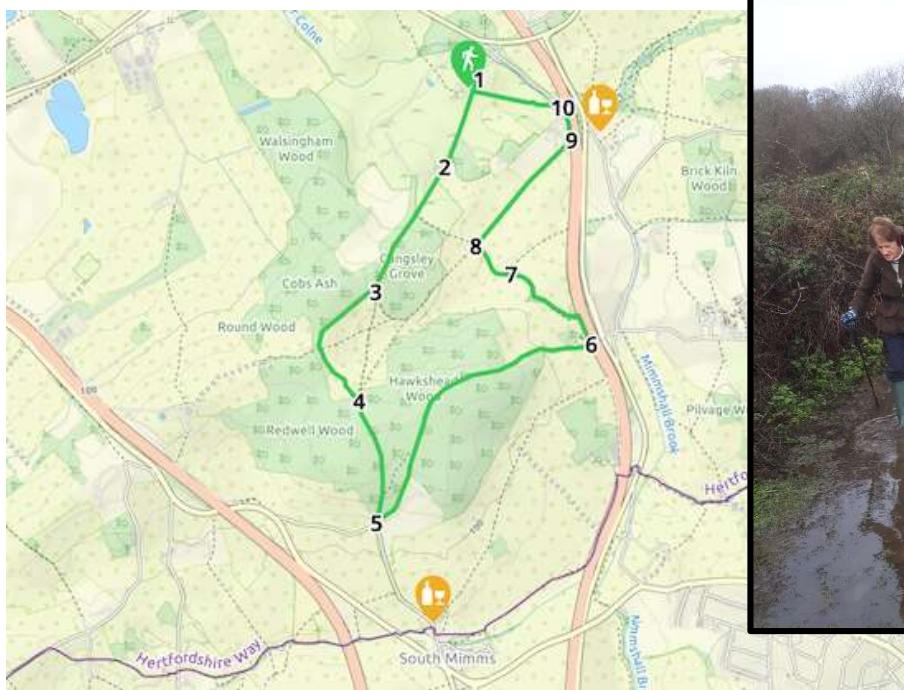
Strolls in the Park

By Rob Goss

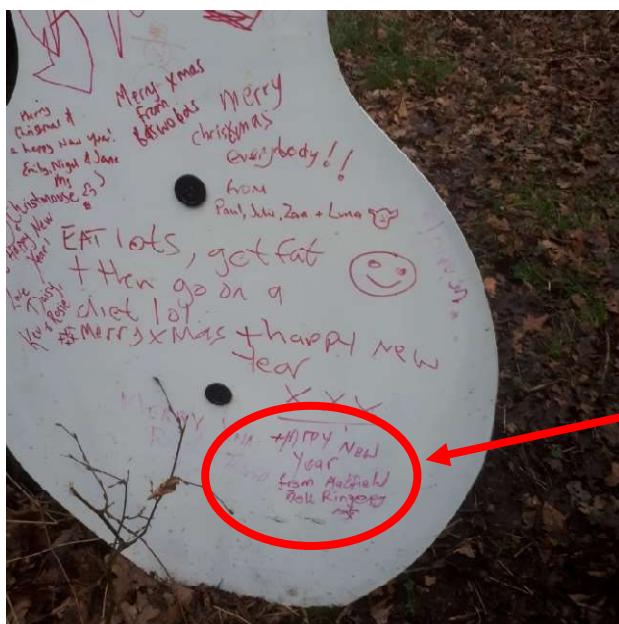
On New Years Day, the Hatfield bellringers met up at North Mymms church and set off on a walk of a few miles which incorporated part of North Mymms Park.



Whilst it didn't rain that day, it had rained a lot during the previous few days and so the paths were muddy and wet. At Cangsley Grove (Point #3 on the map), we had to traverse this large, deep puddle and Dianne (with walking sticks) and Ron (standing in the middle) were both well-prepared wearing wellies. The rest of us, including Graham and Mary in this picture, struggled to keep our feet dry.



As we headed back through Hawkshead Wood between points #5 and #6 on the map, we came across this 'snowman' strapped to a tree with a marker pen attached. Fran duly added a 'Happy New Year' message on to the board before we continued through the wood.



Fran's message

Partially hidden behind some bushes at point #7 on the map, we came across this old building which is the remains of a wind-pump. The well in front of the pump used to serve the local farms and homes in Victorian times.



In February, we arranged another walk, this time from Wheathampstead to Batford and we had glorious sunshine. Wellies were not required as we made our way north out of Wheathampstead passing Mid Herts golf course and then turned left down towards Mackerye End and from there we made our way to Batford where we stopped for cakes supplied by Dianne and Sue. The return route took us along part of the old Wheathampstead-Luton railway line before we made our way back to St Helen's church.



Young@Herts – First Quarter Peals

By Jen Johnson

Congratulations to two Young@Herts ringers who scored quarter peals at their first attempt on 22 January.

These quarters were specially arranged to follow up the progress made at the recent masterclasses. Louisa rang the tenor behind to Grandsire Doubles at Lemsford and Lucy trebled to Plain Bob Doubles at St Stephens St Albans. The standard of ringing in both quarters was very good with almost no corrections needed by any of the band. Half the Lemsford band were young ringers and four of the St Stephens band (three of whom ring at this tower). The Bob Doubles was conducted by Y@H Captain Lucas. A great achievement!

Thanks to both towers for hosting the Y@H, Richard Pether for making tea and Melanie Williams for the celebratory chocolate muffins!

St Albans, St Stephen

Sunday, 22 January 2023 in 43m (8–2–4 in A)

1260 Plain Bob Doubles

1. Lucy A Pether
2. Jennifer V Johnson
3. Thomas R Groves
4. Michael C Below
5. Lucas J Williams (C)
6. Nicholas W Groves

A Young@Herts quarter

First attempt 1

Hertford County Association

Lemsford, Hertfordshire

St John Evangelist

Sunday, 22 January 2023 in 43m (3–2–4)

1320 Grandsire Doubles

1. Jennifer V Johnson
2. Lucas J Williams
3. Stephen Haynes
4. Thomas R Groves
5. Michael C Below (C)
6. Louisa Haynes

A Young@Herts quarter

First attempt 6

Another First Quarter Peal

On Sunday 8th January 2023, Hana Booth rung her first quarter at **Sandridge** in 37minutes:

1260 Plain Bob Doubles

1. Christine Nutton
2. Judith Titmus
3. Callum Hayes
4. Richard Hayes
5. Vivian Nutton (C)
6. Hana Booth

Rung on Epiphany Sunday in memory of Roland King, former ringer and for over 60 years churchwarden of Sandridge.

A Celebration of Trevor

By Vivian Nutton

The remarkable achievements of Trevor Hawkins as organist and ringer at Sandridge were celebrated at the Sunday morning service at Sandridge on January 22, when he was officially given the title of organist emeritus. He had originally been appointed in November 1953 for the time being following the tragic death of his predecessor in a motor cycle accident. Shortly

afterwards he took up ringing, and with a gap at the end of the 1970s he has been playing the organ and climbing the steep ladder to the belfry ever since. He served as Secretary and Steeple Keeper, and must have taught very many to ring. He was elected a College Youth in 1963, and has rung a number of peals around the country, and even appeared on USA television as a visiting ringer in Boston. He used to go regularly to Lemsford to help with teaching learners there. His most recent quarter was in February 2022 when he was 92 on the same bell that he rang for his first quarter in 1960.



Such long service would be reason enough for notice, but it is made even more remarkable by the fact that he was born in Walthamstow with severe deafness. He was made to sit at the front of the class at a deaf school in Margate so that he could hear the teacher shouting at him – these were the

days before hearing aids! After running a seaside hotel in Hastings, his parents moved to St Albans for safety in the middle of the war, and he has remained there living in the same house ever since.

His mother in particular was musical and he inherited her musical ear, learning the piano at home and around 1950 the organ at the nearby church of St Saviour. He was interested in electronics, calibrating various instruments at Marconi's factory, and building himself a small portable electronic organ. He developed his skills further not only making small portable organs for friends, but also until his late eighties repairing church electric organs around the country as far North as Bradford. He rigged up his own sound system in church, to the bafflement of another deaf parishioner whose hearing aid used a different wavelength.

He is a skilled photographer, and several villagers have had their formal photographs taken by him. He has also been heavily involved in working for the deaf in the county, organising outings, fundraising, and even sitting in the front seat and using sign language while deaf friends took their driving tests. He demonstrated in church how to indicate an emergency stop. He has also helped to raise funds for medical and relief work in Nepal, and, since he is a shy man, there may be other aspects of his remarkable life that he has not revealed.

He will continue to ring and to play the organ during the Sunday service, but he has now handed over most of the playing to a (slightly) younger man – me.

Vivian Nutton

A Day Out in Oxfordshire

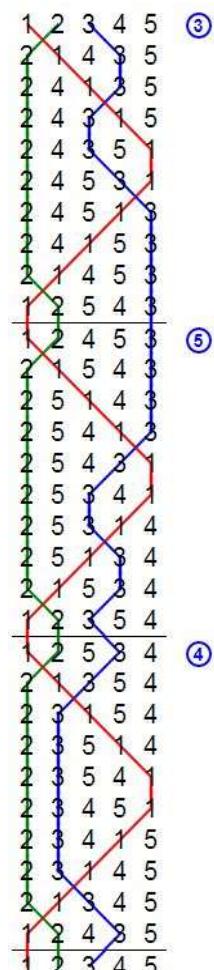
By Alison Evans, St Michael's, St Albans

After a two year hiatus, it was lovely for the St Michael's band to be able to get on the road again for an autumn outing. This time, we went to south west Oxfordshire, visiting five ground floor rings not far from Abingdon. It was a fine sunny, morning and, passing the Mini factory at Cowley on the Oxford ring road, we made good time, arriving a few minutes early at the first tower at Marcham.

An anticlockwise six (8cwt), the sallies were lovely, thick red and yellow ones, and the bells went well. The church's dedication is All Saints and the lady who let us in had mentioned that the local band ring the method of the same name, All Saints Place Doubles, so we followed suit. We also took the opportunity of ringing Oxfordshire Slow Course which we had learned specially for the occasion. The next tower was Steventon, an 11cwt six, the ropes for which hang just inside the church porch. The bells had recently been refurbished and one of the locals told us our timing was good, as they are much nicer now than they were before! The tower captain and steeplekeeper had very kindly laid on tea and coffee which was welcome on a fresh autumn day, especially as we were ringing with the church doors open to allow the air to circulate.

The church is on the western outskirts of the village and the approach road is crossed by the railway line connecting Didcot Parkway to Swindon. The level crossing was closed both on our way to ring and when we left: en route to the next tower, we had to wait for what seemed like ages until one Intercity train in each direction had rushed through.

Oxfordshire Slow Course
Doubles



This made us a few minutes late arriving at our first eight-bell tower of the day, Drayton (9 cwt). The ringing chamber was quite compact but the bells went nicely and, after an enjoyable three quarters of an hour, we were ready for lunch! The Plum Pudding in Milton had been recommended by the tower contact there. The pub was very busy, as they were hosting a beer festival that weekend, but the food came promptly. Apart from the opportunity to try some different beer, there was an added attraction in the shape of three steam engines which arrived while we were eating and parked outside.

The church at Milton is just across the road from the pub so everyone was able to have a good look at the steam engines on their way to afternoon ringing. The ring is a 6cwt eight and the ringing chamber is nice and bright.



The route to the final tower took us parallel to the River Thames and past the nature reserve at Wittenham Clumps to the village of Brightwell-cum-Sotwell. St Agatha's has eight bells (9 cwt) which were refurbished in 2016.

In addition to All Saints Place and Oxfordshire Slow Course Doubles, we rang a variety of methods throughout the day, including rounds (with and without called changes) at all the towers, Plain Bob Minor and Triples, as well as Grandsire, Stedman and Middlesex Bob Triples. All the bells went well and sounded lovely, so they were all a pleasure to ring. Even the people who normally say they don't like outings seemed to have enjoyed themselves!

Although St Michael's is an eight-bell tower, there are only seven of us in the band so it was great to be joined by ringing family members, as well as friends from other St Albans towers - thank you to everyone who supported us. Particular congratulations go to Eleanor Sage: her parents are both in the band so she's been coming on outings with us since she was a baby but this time, she rang in all the towers. Well done, Eleanor!



Peal at Sandridge

Members of the St Albans District rang this peal at Sandridge:

Saturday, 21 January 2023 in 2h 36 (6–0–18 in B♭)

5040 Minor (7 methods)

1. Thelwall Bob 2&3. Bamburgh Surprise, Westminster Surprise 4&5. Elston Delight, Ipswich Surprise. 6. London Surprise 7. Oxford Treble Bob

1. Robert J Crocker
2. Jonathan R Pawley
3. Andrew B Mills
4. Helen Porter
5. Ian K Bushell
6. Adrian P Sweeting (C)

February District meeting (Radlett)

By Anne Pegum (District Secretary)

On Saturday, 18 February a select group of ringers met at Christ Church, Radlett for the monthly district practice. Various methods were rung from rounds and plain hunt for Jeannette, the learner who had to leave before the photo was taken, to Grandsire, Stedman and even Cambridge several times. Also missing from the photo are Dorothea Mayne and Neil Evans. Coffee, tea and cakes were enjoyed by all.



and

Do come to the next meeting at St Stephens on 18 March, 10.00 - 12.00.

Dates for Your Diary (District Meetings)

- 18 March St Stephen's (6)
- 15 April St Michael's (8)
- **22 April** **HCACR AGM at Bushey (8) (Service 4.30pm, meeting at 6pm)**
- 20 May Ridge (6) + Short meeting
- 17 June **District Outing – probably to Essex (Great Dunmow area)**
- 15 July Lemsford (6)
- 19 August St Paul's Walden (anti-clockwise 6)
- 16 September Welwyn (8) + Short meeting
- 14 October Monken Hadley (8)
- 18 November Hatfield (10)
- 16 December Kimpton (8) + Christmas/Nominations Meeting

All meetings 10 – 12 noon unless stated