

St Albans District Newsletter

Volume 28 Issue 3 – August 2023

St Albans District Outing June 2023

The St Albans District Outing this year was based just over the county border in Essex in the Great Dunmow area. About 18 people attended and the weather was kind.



First of the day was **St Mary's Stansted Mountfitchet**. This church is quite isolated and situated about a mile outside the village. It's now a redundant church under the administration of The Churches Conservation Trust. An anticlockwise 13 cwt eight on plain bearings which Edmund Wilkinson (our host) kindly oiled a few days before our visit. These bells are rarely rung nowadays as there are no services and no resident ringers. They were rung for the Coronation in May and strangely there was actually a wedding taking place on the afternoon of the 17th June so we were able to leave the bells up. A steep ladder led up to a trapdoor entry and we did struggle to get some good ringing here. However, a good experience for many.





Ringling at Henham

Henham, a picture postcard village, was our next tower. Tommy Groves took charge of this tower. An easy-going lovely ground floor ring of six where we rang a variety of methods from rounds and call changes up to Surprise Minor and we generally achieved a good standard.

Off then to **Great Easton** a few miles down the road. Another ground floor ring and again a



great ring of six. A fairly large bell dated 1826 was mounted on a frame in the ringing chamber. We rang several different methods including a course of London Minor.



Ringling at Great Easton

The bell in the Ringing Chamber at Great Easton

LUNCH was at **The Angel & Harp** in Great Dunmow – wonderfully organised by Anne Pegum.



The long ropes at Great Dunmow

After lunch it was a short walk up the road to St Mary's church at **Great Dunmow** – a heavy ring of 8 on the ground floor and very long ropes. There was a rope guide about 15 feet up which helped but these bells proved to be quite difficult to strike well. This wasn't helped by someone using an angle grinder a few yards from the open door of the church. We did however manage to get through half a course of Cambridge Major.

A few miles down the road took us to **Felsted**. Two old aluminium headstocks were mounted on the ceiling beam. Aluminium headstocks are unusual – most are cast iron – but apparently in the late 1930's when these bells were re-furbished, aluminium was the favoured material over cast iron and when the bells were re-hung about 20 years ago English Heritage required these two headstocks to be retained. I thought this was the best 8 of the day and we had some good ringing here.



The aluminium headstock mounted on the ceiling beam at Felsted

Last tower of the day was the heavy 8 at **Great Waltham** and perhaps the biggest challenge. All the bells were quite deep set and many struggled (including me) to get them off the balance.



The ringing Chamber at Great Waltham



Great Waltham



The steps up to the Ringing Chamber at Great Waltham

Young@Herts at RWNYC 2023, York.

By Toby Hornberger

This year's Ringing World National Youth Contest (RWNYC) was held in York on Saturday 8th July. There were 25 teams in total with eight teams competing in the method ringing, and seventeen taking part in the call changes competition.

My group, Young@Herts (consisting of eight competing young ringers and two reserves, ages between 13 and 18), rang call changes and we were the last group to be judged that afternoon. Because of this, we began the day by touring some local towers with a hired bus. Our first stop was St Stephen's in Acomb just outside York. We didn't have long to ring there, as there were other groups scheduled before and after us, but we still got a taste of the tower's fun ring of six. Then it was straight back to York and along the river to All Saints North Street. The church stands on land that has been hallowed for over a thousand years and has a ground floor ring of eight. We had a little more time at this tower, and managed to practice the call changes we would later perform in the contest. Then it was time to head to York Minster - one of the highlights of the day. We had started the morning by ringing small and light bells, but at the Minster moved onto some of the heaviest in the country! After a short wait Young@Herts was called up, and we climbed the hundred steps to the ringing chamber. As there were so many teams, the Minster bells were being divided among the groups, but Young@Herts members still managed to ring quite a few of them. One of our ringers, Jack, even rang the 3 ton tenor! As Jack soon found out, standing the bells was a lot harder than ringing them, and as we later wandered around town and heard other groups ringing, we realised that few young ringers that day would manage to stand the tenor on their first try. After visiting the stall in the Minsters, having a go on the two mini-rings, and having a quick lunch, we headed to our next tower, Saint Martin Le Grand, a nice-sounding ground floor ring of eight. Then we had a speedy walk across the city to Saint Lawrence, the contest tower for the call change groups.



The 2023 Young@Herts team

We arrived in good time for our afternoon contest slot, and then after a quick bit of encouragement from Jen Johnson, our Young@Herts ringing master, the 8 ringers and 2 reserves (acting as timer and clicker) went rather nervously up to the ringing chamber. The Saint Lawrence bells were lovely and smooth, and after a confidence-inspiring performance in which I rang the tenor, we came back down feeling relieved and happy and were greeted by a round of applause from our entourage of parents, local ringers and Jen. We posed for a quick team photo, then raced off to our final tower of the day, the Catholic Oratory opposite the Minster. The rest of the day went rather quickly, and we soon found ourselves seated in York's impressive Central Methodist Church where the results ceremony would take place. After a tense wait, the results began, and the Young@Herts team waited nervously as places were slowly read out. Finally, with five places to go, and it was announced that we had tied in 4th place! To be 4th out of a total of seventeen teams was an amazing result, and we were called forward to receive our RWNYC 2023 medals. Then came the results for the method ringers and soon the whole event was over. Outside we said our goodbyes, some of which were final, as two of our ringers, Lukas (this year's team captain) and Chris, will be heading off to university and aging-out of competing in youth ringing. Tommy was promoted to Captain of Young@Herts and will lead us in next year's competition.

Even though RWNYC 2023 is only just over, details are already being shared for next year's contest, which will take place in London based at St. Mary-le-Bow. Even though two of our best ringers, Lukas and Chris, have now aged-out and left the group, new ringers are always joining and existing ones are improving, so we'll be ready to compete again in 2024.
[Toby Hornberger, 16, rings at St Etheldreda's, Hatfield]

Readers with access to Facebook can see more details and photos [here](#).

Cathedral Outing

By Jonathan Humbert

A great day out for the St Albans Cathedral Society annual outing on Saturday 8th July.

A proper, old-fashioned coach trip to St Mary's **Saffron Walden**, Cathedral Church of St James & St Edmund **Bury St Edmunds**, University Church of St Mary the Great **Cambridge**, All Saints **Kempston**, St Andrews **Biggleswade** & St Mary's **Luton**.

30 of us in number and some very plausible Grandsire Cinques, Stedman Caters, Little Bob Max, Erin Caters & Cambridge Royal-plus more importantly, lots of rounds & call changes for our new(ish) influx of learners.

A fabulous lunch at the Baron of Beef in Cambridge and an evening meal back in St Albans followed by late drinkies for the hard-core few!

With many thanks to the kind towers who hosted us today and our various members, friends and supporters. A top day in my not so humble opinion and just what ringing is all about!



In front of the baptistery in St Mary's, Luton, Left to Right:

Barry Egglesfield, Olly Watson, Stephen Penney, Raymond Harwood, Julie Nye, Deirdre Watson, Brian Watson, Jacqui Tan, Alison Evans, Christine Carter, Chloe Amos-Edkins, John McClenahan, James Crawley, Rachel Moll (holding baby James), Jonathan Humbert, Janet Penney, Magda Busz, David Hodgskin, Hayley Wells, Christopher Ball, Nikki Wills, Rod Bickerton, Angela Blackburn, Julie Grimwade, Drew Wills, Keith Lewin.

St Michael's Folk Evening

By Alison Evans

The St Michael's Folk Evening takes place in the oldest, most historic, part of St Albans, popularly known as St Michael's village, on the first Wednesday in July each year. It's been going for about thirty-five years and sees the main road through the village closed to traffic, to accommodate musicians, dancers and enthusiastic onlookers. There used to be four pubs along St Michael's Street from its junction with Fishpool Street, hosting performances as well as offering refreshment and the ringers used to practice as normal, undisturbed.

However, as the pubs have closed one by one, leaving only The Six Bells, participants have had to find new places to perform and, for the last ten years, the church authorities have offered the use of the churchyard. Although this meant we lost our regular practice on Folk Evening, we have been added to the programme for the event and open proceedings by ringing for about three

quarters of an hour leading up to the start of the dancing at eight o'clock. The Morris and Folk dancers take it in turns to perform at four spots in the road, the children of St Michael's school present maypole dancing in the playground and bands take up positions indoors and out along the length of St Michael's Street.

As we ring, the churchyard gradually fills up, as it's the location of a beer tent, a stall selling hog roast, an ice cream stand, as well as a band and this year it was The Swan Vesta Social Club, an Anglo Cuban band. While everything is being set up, the Swan Vestas' lead singer encourages the assembling crowd to give a round of applause at the end of each touch, which we enjoy greatly, as it doesn't happen after any other performance. The church sees the expansion of the Folk Evening into the churchyard as a good way of being more closely involved with and part of the local community. I think it brings bell ringing to a wider audience too.

We aim to ring a mixture of methods on six or eight bells depending on who is available. The St Michael's band still has only seven resident ringers but a number of other District ringers were invited this year and so we managed some good eight bell ringing.



A Selection of Peals and Quarters

Cambridge University Guild

Sandridge, Hertfordshire

St Leonard

Saturday, 8 July 2023 in 2h 40 (6–0–18 in Bb)

5040 Cambridge Surprise Minor

1. Vivian Nutton (Selwyn)
2. Alan T Winter (Christ's)
3. Christopher H Rogers (Emmanuel)
4. Catriona C Agg (Jesus)
5. Jonathan A Agg (Emmanuel) (C)
6. Brian G Meads (Corpus Christi)

Rung as a Golden Wedding anniversary compliment to Christine and Vivian Nutton.

Harpenden, Hertfordshire

St Nicholas

Monday, 31 July 2023 in 46m (15–0–16 in F#)

1280 Superlative Surprise Major

1. Nicholas Groves
2. Christine M Carter
3. Liz Middleton
4. Ann Evans
5. Thomas R Groves
6. Lucas J Williams
7. Brian D Crawley
8. Richard Sales (C)

First surprise major - 1.

First in method - 5 & 6.

Hertford County Association

Kimpton, Hertfordshire

St Peter and St Paul

Monday, 31 July 2023 in 46m (10–2–15 in G)

1280 Plain Bob Major

1. Liz Middleton
2. Ann Evans
3. Nicholas Groves
4. Christine M Carter
5. Thomas R Groves
6. Lucas J Williams
7. Richard Sales
8. Brian D Crawley (C)

3 - First inside to major

Hertford County Association

Sandridge, Hertfordshire

St Leonard

Monday, 24 July 2023 in 37m (6–0–18 in Bb)

1260 Plain Bob Doubles

1. Lucy A Pether
2. Lucas J Williams
3. Hana Booth
4. Thomas R Groves
5. Callum Hayes (C)
6. Louisa Haynes

Rung by a band of local students, ages 13 to 21.

St Albans, Hertfordshire

St Peter

Thursday, 20 July 2023 in 50m (24–0–3 in Eb)

1282 Cambridge Surprise Royal

1. Stephen W Penney (C)
2. Julie Grimwade
3. Angela Blackburn
4. Thomas R Groves
5. Ann Evans
6. Andrew M Reeve
7. Claire C Nicholson
8. Bjørn E Bradstock
9. Richard A Horne
10. Richard Sales

First quarter of Surprise Royal on an inside bell, 4.

Ringin Japanese Style

By Lucy Hornberger



Lucy who rings at Hatfield is currently in Japan and sent this picture.

The cylindrical bell is rung by swinging the 'log' you can see on the right-hand side of the picture...

Editor Rob Goss