

St Albans District Newsletter is now in its 30th Year!

St Albans District Newsletter

Volume 30 Issue 1 – April 2024

Second at Seecon!

By Jen Johnson

On Saturday 13 April, Young@Herts hosted SEECON (South East England Youth Striking Contest).

The venue for the day was Bushey, but my day began at 8am in Stevenage collecting the larger parts of The Bells Coll Reg mini ring with the help of Alan Smith and his camper van.

We welcomed seven other teams, from Essex, Kent, Sussex, Winchester & Portsmouth, Surrey, Middlesex & London, and Berks & Bucks.

The contest began promptly at 10am with Young@Herts ringing first.

A minor change of plan right at the start for Young@Herts because we decided that Toby (who is very tall) would be better suited to ringing the tenor rather than the 6th so he and William swapped places. (For those readers unfamiliar with Bushey, the clock supporting beam is directly above the 6th and a tall ringer will catch their hands on this beam at backstroke).

Whilst not ringing their test piece, the young ringers had handbell sessions with Roger Baldwin and Stuart Brant, and tried out the mini ring, The Bells Coll Reg, courtesy of Chris Winkless-Clark from Cambridge. He and Stella were ably assisted by Richard Sales (who knows a thing or two about mini rings!).

Refreshments were available all morning, with donations invited from the adults present. The

kitchen crew, under the direction of Liz Walker, were MAGNIFICENT! They prepared a fantastic "ringers tea" lunch (and anyone who's ever been to a Western District meeting will know that they do quality catering 🍪🍩🍰🥧.) I cannot say a big enough THANK YOU to Liz and the team. They worked really hard and I couldn't have done this event without them. And the cake makers produced a fantastic selection of cake for us.

Thank you to all who helped out with catering in any way.

The judges were Y@H past Captain Lucas Williams, and James Cundy, another Birmingham Uni ringer. They did a splendid job and placed Young@Herts SECOND 👍👏. The winners were The Winchester & Portsmouth team.

The day finished with open ringing at North Mymms, South Mimms, and Ridge.

THANKS to all who contributed in any way today. It was a successful event, enjoyed by all who attended. A proper team effort!

Young @Herts Team:

Treble. Nick 2nd. Joe 3rd. Louisa 4th. Alice
5th. Joseph 6th. William 7th. Tommy Tenor. Toby



Money for Old Rope

By Rob Goss

Collecting dust at the back of our Ringing Chamber at St Eth's in Hatfield was a battered cardboard box. I always knew that it contained old bell ropes but we'd decided to have a bit of a clear out and tidy up

"What are we going to do with these old ropes?" – I asked...

"Sell them on EBay?" came a response.

There was then the inevitable discussion as to "Who would want an old bell rope and what would they use it for?!" ...anyway Mary & I decided we'd give it a go and try and sell one on EBay.

We brought one of the ropes with a plain green sally home, took some photos and the next day we searched on EBay for other bellropes being sold to give us an idea of the starting price. We found a few others going for around £50 but there were no 'watchers' and no bids – so we decided to start a bit lower. We opted for £10 to see how it went.

The standard auction time on EBay is 7 days and within one day we had 3 or 4 "watchers" and at the end of the auction we received the final bid of £10.50p. We'd asked £6.99 for delivery (UK only) and after EBay took their commission (and we'd found Evri Ltd who deliver for £5.95), we ended up with a profit of £9.07 – which went into our bellringer's bank account.

Most of the ropes in the old cardboard box were tri-colour and some were so old that they were hemp ropes for the full length rather than hemp below the sally and pre-stretched polyester above the sally. The tri-colour sallies seemed to be much more sought after – we finally sold eight ropes at an average selling price of nearly £25. That first rope received the lowest bid.

The whole exercise was not without problems however, one buyer requested it be sent to an Evri collection point (a Newsagents in North London) but the newsagents only kept it for 3 days and the rope was returned to us. We then contacted the buyer and he paid the £6.99 again and gave us a standard house address and so all was resolved. Another rope was delivered to a house in Cheshire and the Evri tracking information (photo) showed that the box had been delivered to her front door, but she claimed that she didn't receive it. We don't know what happened to the box as the lady who purchased it did ask her immediate neighbours and she acknowledged the delivery photo – but said her husband was in that the time and there was no knock on the door. Eventually (after about six weeks and numerous emails) we received a credit from Evri Ltd and we sent a replacement rope – (fortunately at that stage we had several left in the box). After that experience I paid the additional £0.60p premium so that a signature was required on delivery.

Overall, we made a total profit of £184.00 over a period of about 5 months.

What did they use them for? Well... we contacted some of the buyers:

One it appears went to another tower in Staffordshire, one went to a lady called Melissa whose son (aged 8) was desperate to learn to ring so Melissa bought the rope for his 9th birthday for his bedroom! We now understand that he *is* learning to ring in The Midlands! Another wanted the rope as he was fixing up an old school bell for his front door & wanted an authentic sally as a bell-pull.

Money for Old Rope? (reproduced by kind permission of the Ringing World)



An Outing to Buckinghamshire

Judith selected four towers in Buckinghamshire for the annual Kimpton Half-Day outing. First on the list was **Penn**, a 9 cwt ground floor six bell tower. Sixteen of us from Kimpton, Lemsford, Hatfield, Knebworth, North Mymms, Wheathampstead and Sandridge arrived in about six cars. Most of us dutifully followed the Sat Nav which took us down some very narrow country lanes and stated 'You Have Arrived at your Destination' when we were at the bottom of a hill on a winding single-track road with fields each side and no sign of a church. However, we persevered and sure enough the church was about half a mile at the top of the hill at the junction with a much wider 'B' road.

The Penn bells were a bit odd-struck and so they weren't easy.

The next tower was **Hughenden** – which is sited adjacent to Hughenden Manor – a National Trust Property. Parking was a bit tight but these were a lovely 14 cwt eight and enjoyed by all. Our best ringing of the day was achieved here with everything from Rounds & Call Changes to a touch of Grandsire Triples.

From there, our Sat Nav again failed us and took us up Frith Hill – some distance from **Great Missenden** church. Access to the church was actually through the village, up a cul-de-sac and over the narrow bridge above the by-pass – which our Sat Nav eventually recognised.

However, thanks to Judith's superb planning we still arrived in plenty of time.

This heavy (26 cwt) eight was another ground floor ring and not as easy to ring as Hughenden but a good 'beefy' eight.



The final tower of the morning was just up the road at **Little Missenden** where there was a very low ceiling and the ropes were close together. This resulted in difficult handling and not the most favoured bells by many of our group. However there were some marvellous mediaeval wall paintings in the church. After a group photo we had an excellent lunch in The Red Lion just up the road.

From Left: Laura, Julia S, Susan, Dianne, Julia P, Judith, Bob, Rosemary, Ron, Mary, Ben, Chris, Rob, Amelia Vivian and Christine went straight to the pub and didn't wait for the photo!

Three Counties Radio ... “THE BOSS” ON THE RADIO

By Jen Johnson

I’m a regular listener to Jonathan Vernon-Smith on BBC 3 Counties Radio (10.00-13.00). Every day at 12.30 they have a light-hearted half hour phone-in about something daft. The subject is flagged up on their Facebook page a couple of days before, and anyone with an amusing anecdote is contacted and invited to take part. I responded to the subject of people who still use paper maps and old fashioned! (haha) satnavs like TomToms. I was thinking mainly of my job, but when the producer rang me, the conversation moved on to bell ringing, and tower grabbing. She was fascinated, and definitely wanted me to be part of the chat. Ten minutes later, she rang back, and invited me to come to the studio in Dunstable, and do an interview, in person, with breakfast show presenter Andy Collins!

Luckily, I was having a couple of weeks off work, and was able to go. So, on Thursday 18th April I set my alarm for silly o’clock (05.30), and crossed my fingers that the M1 would be on its best behaviour for my journey to Dunstable. I arrived at the studio in good time and was greeted by the really friendly staff. I was given coffee and waited in the lobby for my turn. On the other side of the glass was the office, where I could see and hear JVS planning his show with his team. I’ve met him before, but as a fan, it was great to see him. He knows all about ringing! He’s friends with Revd Tom



Jen Johnson with BBC 3 Counties presenter Andy Collins

Sander who established the new, and now flourishing band at Flamstead. I bumped into JVS a few years back, outside Flamstead during a district meeting. Jonathan was hoping to show visiting friends the ringing, but unfortunately it was just days after the ringing chamber had moved upstairs! At 07.50 I was taken into the studio area, where one of the producers was live with Andy doing a phone-in quiz. Following this I was shown into the studio, and seated opposite Andy Collins, the breakfast show presenter (if his name seems familiar, he is seen on tv sometimes, and presented Family Fortunes in 2002). I was quite nervous, and found the headphones distracting, but Andy could not have been nicer, and immediately put me at my ease. He asked great questions about ringing, and definitely got the best out of me in the interview. We covered tower grabbing, outings, visiting other towers, young ringers (got Young@Herts a mention), and learning to ring. I’d deliberately worn my Young@Herts polo shirt with “Boss” on it, which got a good laugh! I would have loved to spend longer going into more detail about everything, but for a five-minute chat, we packed an awful lot in. Feedback has been positive, so I can only hope that I managed to present ringing as a fun, if somewhat unusual hobby. It’s available on BBC Sounds until the 16 May and my bit appears 1hr:53 mins into the 4-hour show..

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p0hm6ntt>

We concluded with an invitation to “ring” the studio bell..... this is a desk bell, such as you would see on the desk at an hotel. And no I’m not counting it in my tower totals.....!

Tower Outing, 2 December 2023

By Anne Pegum

On a misty, murky Saturday morning in early December, members of the Radlett, Ridge and South Mymms bands gathered at South Mymms for the start of our local outing. Our choice of first tower had to be changed because the bells were unavailable, so we started with the familiar bells at South Mymms to warm up and sort ourselves into fewer cars for the rest of the day. We rang a variety of methods and call changes on these bells we know well before moving on to our next stop.

Monken Hadley was a step up in terms of the number of steps to the ringing chamber and the number of bells, as some of our band have only rung regularly on six bells. After a short delay getting into the tower (solved by one of the congregation helping to prepare the church for the next day's service recognising me and letting us in) we started, after raising the bells, with rounds and plain hunt working our way up to plain hunt on 8. Shaun and Cath left us at this point while the rest moved on to our next location, lunch at the Cock Inn in Cockfosters.

Having refreshed ourselves we moved on to **St Mary's in Enfield** with recently rehung bells rung from a refurbished ringing chamber accessed up half steps. As these were again unfamiliar bells we kept the ringing to familiar methods on seven bells. Our onward journey to the final tower, at **North Mymms**, was delayed because of major electricity supply works which caused holdups on the roads in between. Another ring of eight but with heavier bells in a stepped ringing chamber, all of which took a little getting used to. Although our time here was curtailed we enjoyed the ringing and the slightly blurry photo below shows the remaining band at North Mymms before we returned to South Mymms to resort the cars and go home in the mist which was still lurking.



l to r: Sue, Sheila, Daniel,
Jules, Adrian, Graham,
Malcolm and Anne

Selected Quarter Peals

St John the Evangelist, **Lemsford**

Friday 5 April 2024 in 39m (3–2–4 in Eb)

1320 Plain Bob Minor

1. Ron E Titmus
2. Judith E Titmus
3. Vivian Nutton
4. Brian D Crawley
5. Callum Hayes
6. Hana Booth (C)

First of minor inside: 5.

St Leonard, **Sandridge**

Sunday, 31 March 2024 in 40m (6–0–18 in Bb)

1260 Plain Bob Doubles

1. Ron E Titmus
2. Hana Booth (C)
3. Jennifer V Johnson
4. Judith E Titmus
5. Vivian Nutton
6. Diego Díaz

First quarter peal: 6.

Rung for Easter Sunday.

St Albans, Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Alban

Sunday, 7 April 2024 in 48m (21–0–19 in E)

1282 Cambridge Surprise Royal

1. Alan G G Smith
2. Ann Evans
3. Hana Booth
4. James W S Crawley
5. Jennifer V Johnson (C)
6. Stephen Crawley
7. Andrew M Reeve
8. Roderic K Bickerton
9. Brian D Crawley
10. Richard Sales

Belated birthday compliment to Ann Evans - the number of changes is not significant!

First blows in Surprise Royal 3. Following first blows in Surprise Maximus last Tuesday!

Don't Forget the Debenham Bell Fund

Alison Evans

Secretary to the Trustees and Treasurer to the Fund

The Debenham Bell Fund offers grants towards the cost of repair, purchase, maintenance or renewal of bells, fittings, ropes or related church fabric for parishes in the HCACR St Albans District. If this type of work needs to be done in your tower and your band or parish needs help with covering the cost, then don't forget that you can apply for a grant. All you have to do is send details of the work and the cost, supported by a quote or an invoice from the supplier.

The fund cannot necessarily cover the full cost of the work, but we can often help. The trustees of can make grants of up to £1000 on their own authority. Larger grants might be possible, subject to convening a meeting and obtaining the approval of the members. Alternatively or in addition, applications can be made to the HCACR Bell Restoration Fund.

If you would like to apply for a grant or for further information, please get in touch with me: my email address is alison.evans@btinternet.com.

Editor Rob Goss