

Ringling Master's Report 2019

It's been another busy year in the South East District. Our ADM in December 2018 was held at Campsea Ashe and Wickham Market. Attendance was good and we rang well. At the meeting I floated the idea of something a bit different in January when we met at Barking and Coddham – a "Bake Off" practice! We invited baked contributions from as many ringers as wished to contribute which resulted in a table groaning with all manner of cakes. The cakes were judged "blind" by those in attendance with Lesley Barrell's contribution a clear winner. It created a new challenge for me as Ringing Master in keeping sufficient ringers in the tower to keep the 8 bells at Coddham going when so many were understandably attracted to the cakes in the church! These are the right sort of challenges to have though and it was pleasing to see so many people there enjoying the afternoon.

In February we visited Parham and Hacheston where attendance was also good and we rang a wide variety of methods. March took us to Offton with Mark running the ringing in my absence. Again attendance was good with a repertoire ranging from rounds and call changes to Bristol Surprise Major.

Traditionally, we have held a District Training Day in April and I felt that the opportunity to visit the newly completed training facility at St. Peter Mancroft in Norwich was too good to resist. This was something of a leap of faith since I wasn't sure how many would be prepared to travel that far but as it turned out I needn't have worried. 16 ringers (neatly naturally splitting about 50/50 into developing ringers and helpers) representing a wide cross section of abilities ventured north across the border where we spent a fascinating morning and early afternoon under the guidance of Centre Manager Nikki Thomas using the training bells and simulator at Mancroft in a wide variety of ways to develop our ringing before venturing across the city for a ring at St. Giles. This is a super facility and sessions are run there regularly for all abilities. I would encourage you to visit.

On Saturday 27th April the Guild AGM was held in Ipswich with ringing at towers throughout the town (and a C2 Safeguarding Course) taking place before the service, tea and meeting at St. Matthew's. This was a great success and certainly showed our district off at its best. I received numerous positive comments as a result and am grateful to all those district members who helped make the AGM such a success.

Our District Striking Competition was held in May at Sproughton with St. Mary-le-Tower winning both the change ringing and the call change competitions. The Guild Striking Competitions were held in the South West District at Polstead and Lavenham with Pettistree winning the 6 bell change ringing competition (Debenham 3rd, SMLT 4th and Hollesley 7th) and teams from towers in our district finishing 2nd (SMLT) 4th (Clopton) and 5th (Debenham) in the call change competition. In the Guild 8 bell competition at Lavenham SMLT came 2nd with our own district team 3rd.

In June we did something a little different with a ringing demonstration at East Bergholt followed by ringing, tea and brief business meeting at Stratford St. Mary. Tea was provided by the Stratford St. Mary ringers and it was great to receive such a warm and enthusiastic welcome from a tower in a neighbouring district. It was a beautifully sunny day and although the demonstration at East Bergholt and the tea and ringing at Stratford St. Mary were well supported there was evidently less interest in the idea of a business meeting at this point in the year.

A new item in our programme of district events was a walk and ring which took place from Hasketon to Grundisburgh and back with ringing at both towers. Sadly, we were not blessed with the best weather given that it was July, but a brave and determined group undertook the walk despite the rain. Pleasingly, the ringing at both towers was excellent with both Grandsire and Stedman Cinques

at Grundisburgh along with plenty of call changes, and a mixture of Surprise Minor methods at Hasketon. The Turk's Head provided an excellent venue for suitable post ringing rehydration...

August saw our annual Quarter Peal & Meal event with QP's scored at Sproughton, Bramford and Coddendam and a pub meal afterwards at the Sorrel Horse in Barham where, sadly, the food was rather patchy. I had a prior engagement on 7th September which prevented me from running the monthly meeting which took place at Iken and Tunstall. My thanks to Tom who stood in for me.

A couple of years ago I moved our annual District Outing from November to October really to try and make the most of the tail end of some better autumnal weather and the extra hours of daylight. I have to admit that, unlike the previous two years, I felt that we were a little light on attendance this time. We had enough ringers, but could easily have welcomed more. We began at the two rings in Hertford; All Saints' (10) & St. Andrew (8) pleasingly coinciding with an open coffee morning at the latter. Then it was on to Codicote (8) before a super lunch at The Brocket Arms in Ayot St. Lawrence. After lunch we braved the long draft at Wheathampstead (8) which are a real test of good handling, before proceeding to the 10 at Hatfield and ending at Essendon (8). I do like to include what one might regard as a ringing "curiosity" in an outing (Basildon in 2017, Reepham in 2018 and Wheathampstead this year) but East Anglian geography means that we do have to travel a little further for our outings if we wish to visit new towers. I would like to make particular mention of how well I felt we rang at Wheathampstead. They are nice bells, but the long length of unguided rope does make them a real challenge, even for the tidiest of ringers.

In November we met at Ufford where I counted 24 ringers present. We rang everything from rounds and call changes up to Stedman Triples and Bristol.

As you may recall from my report 12 months ago, I will be stepping down as Ringing Master in December but I would like to express my thanks to you all for supporting what has been a wide range of ringing activities in our district this year and especially to Abby who has done much of the organisation with local towers, and to Mark and Tom for running ringing on the two occasions when I was otherwise committed.

Jonathan Williamson