

A black and white photograph of a church tower and nave. The tower is made of stone and has a wooden belfry with louvers. Scaffolding is visible around the tower. The nave has Gothic-style windows. The foreground shows a path and some trees.

# **The Suffolk Guild of Ringers Newsletter**

**Stonham  
Aspal**

**Winter 2007**

**[www.suffolkbells.org.uk](http://www.suffolkbells.org.uk)**

**Editorial**

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**Deadline for Spring Issue  
February 18th 2008**

*Thought for the season*

**Lord, grant us all  
the joy of the angels,  
the wisdom of the wise men,  
the obedience of the shepherds,  
the boldness of the kings  
the gentleness of Mary,  
and the peace of the Christ-Child  
this Christmas time and evermore  
.Amen.**

**Carl Melville**

## Letter from the Editor...

Hi everyone!

Thank you all once again for sending in all your news and Christmas Items.

Lots has happened over the past few months ringing-wise, as you read on you will get a glimpse of some of those things...

If your tower would like extra, or indeed less, copies of this Newsletter Publication, then do let me know. I work on last year's annual report, which means over the year some towers become ringable again, new recruits add to numbers and so on...

Alternatively, you can download a copy from the Guild Website, [www.suffolkbells.org.uk/newsletter](http://www.suffolkbells.org.uk/newsletter)

Christmas is a really busy time with services, ringing, family and friends, but I hope you all have a really good time and peaceful New Year.

God Bless

**Carl**

# **South West News**

## **District Striking Competition**

The striking competition, on 23<sup>rd</sup> June, was held at Polstead. No fewer than nine teams took part! This is such a welcome increase in numbers as, although last year there were five teams, in previous years there were as few as three.

The bands, which all rang call changes, were from Boxford, Cowlinge, Hadleigh ( 2 teams), Nayland, Polstead, Stoke by Nayland, Stradishall and Stratford St Mary. For many ringers, this was their first competition and much nervous laughter was heard among ringers waiting for their turn. The winners were Hadleigh 'A Team' and Stratford St Mary and Stoke by Nayland were jointly in second place.

A bring and share supper covered many tables with delicious food, ensuring that the whole occasion was a social as well as a ringing success.

We are very grateful to Brian and Peta Whiting for judging the competition.

### **SW District mini tour**

Christine and Richard Knight organised a tour on 28<sup>th</sup> July. Towers visited were Swaffham Prior, Swaffham Bulbeck, Bottisham and Fulbourn. Over twenty ringers had a most enjoyable afternoon and evening. It was wonderful to see Christine, whose terrible back problems have prevented her ringing for so long, sitting on her special high stool and ringing as though ringing while sitting down is the norm.

### **St Peter and St Mary's, Stowmarket**

### **Open Tower**

**Saturday 1st December**

**10am-4pm**

Calling all ringers, to come and help out. Last year we welcomed well over 100 visitors with ringing demos and trips to the bells. Contact Winston Girling or Carl Melville if you can help out!

# **North West News**

## **Quarter Peal Report by David Bimson**

On Monday 2 July a quarter peal of Plain Bob Major was rung at Elveden Memorial Tower. So what is unusual in that? Two reasons: -

The quarter peal was composed and conducted by Louis Suggett; at 15 years old Louis is one of the most talented young ringers in the Guild.

Neville Turner, Joe Stocking and John Ramsbottom recorded the quarter peal. Why? It all stemmed from a visit by an American gentleman named Robert Knock to Elveden. Mr Knock, now in his mid 80s was married (as a GI) to a local girl at the Parish Church of St Andrew and St Patrick in 1945. Mr Knock has kept in contact with the village and re-visited Elveden on several occasions. It was on one of these visits that the bells were ringing and the "beauty of the sound" was commented upon. This sowed a seed in Neville's mind and with the help of Ruth Suggett (District Ringing Master) and David Bimson (Tower Captain) the recording was arranged. Mr Knock was the first recipient of a copy with others going to the ringers and Lord Iveagh (custodian of The Memorial Tower). A copy will shortly be available in the Guild Library.

The details;

1264 changes of Plain Bob Major in 49 minutes

Lesley A Wilson (Buxhall)  
Ruth Ogden (Ely - DA)  
Claire E Monk (Walsham le Willows)  
Louis P H Suggett (Bardwell)  
David J Steed (Buxhall)  
Josephine Beever (Stowmarket)  
Paul V Stannard (Barrow)  
Maurice J Rose (Rougham)

Composed and conducted by Louis P H Suggett

A regular practice night is proposed at Elveden on alternate months, commencing from 5 September on the first Wednesdays. This practice is aimed at those wishing to advance their 8 bell method ringing. For more information please contact David Bimson, Tower Captain, on 01842 810760 or Ruth Suggett, District Ringing Master on 01359 251896.

## **100 Not Out**

### **The oldest member of the Suffolk Guild**

On Wednesday 31st of November, John and I were privileged to visit John Banks, the oldest member ever, of the Suffolk Guild of Ringers. He was celebrating his 100th birthday.

We were greeted by his daughter and taken into the sitting room where John got up to greet us. He is a fine upstanding gentleman, and it was difficult to believe that he was a hundred. He is a bit hard of hearing but he enjoyed our company and graciously received the small gift we had taken for him.

He proudly showed us the card he has received from Her Majesty the Queen. It stood in pride of place on the television set.

Jack did a lot of his ringing at the Norman Tower in Bury St Edmunds, and due to his great age, is only known to a few present day ringers. Maurice Rose and Paul Stannard both visited him on his birthday.

We wish him well and hope that he has many more birthdays to come!

Shirley Girt

## **Stonham Aspal—** **Light at the end of the tunnel!**

Many of you will be aware that the ten bells at the Church of St Mary and St Lambert, Stonham Aspal, have been silent for some time now. Movement in the frame initially meant that only the front six could be rung, whilst other work on the Church itself has resulted in no ringing at all.

However, things are looking up and there is hope that the bells will be ringing and back in action early in the New Year at the latest.

Work on the bell frame, which is the original massive elm frame fitted when Squire Ecclestone augmented the ring from five to ten bell in 1742, is just a small part of the extensive work carried out to the Church. Work has also included repairs to the clerestory (the architectural jewel of the Church), other substantial repairs and a great deal of refurbishment of all stages of the tower.

Funding has come from a range of sources, including local trusts, individual donations and from the Suffolk Guild, particularly towards the bell frame. You'll be pleased to know that the most noticeable feature of the Church, the wooden belfry, will remain unchanged!

Roy Newson

## **Guild Peal Week**

The next Guild Peal Week will be held from Saturday 9th February - Sunday 17th February 2008. Last year's event was a massive success, even though seven peals were lost!

Anyone who would like to ring in peals/a peal, either to help out or to do something for yourself, please contact me on either 01394 411802, 07934 445232 or email me on [master@suffolkbells.org.uk](mailto:master@suffolkbells.org.uk).

Anyone can take part in Guild Peal Week, from first peelers through to experienced peal ringers interested in doing something fancy. Peals don't have to be organised through me - you can organise and ring your own peal with nothing to do with me - but I would appreciate it if everybody would send the details to me so I can send it all in to the Ringing World together as I did with the last one.

Richard Munnings

## **Guild Training Day**

Saturday 20th October loomed expectantly. People gathered, chewing nails, nervous and yet strangely excited. Everything was set-up and ready to go and people held their breath, wondering what was going to happen next...

Thankfully, the 2007 Suffolk Guild Training Day went a lot better than the Rugby World Cup Final for this merry bunch of English folk, although after it's success we're not going to wait another four years until the next one.

Hollesley may on the face of it seem a bizarre place to hold a Guild event of any kind, being a long way from anywhere. And yet people from as far as Long Melford, Stradishall, Glemsford and Woolpit came to partake in this novel experience.

So why Hollesley and what persuaded people to come so far for just another training day? Mainly because it wasn't just another training day. Because Hollesley has the 'listening course'.

The listening course is a new and interesting way (and possibly the best way) to get people listening to their striking. Made up of three components, people can learn to listen to their striking on any number of bells, to any method on anything from the treble to the tenor without a sound being heard outside. Conversely, inside as you wander from room to room, you are met with the sound of bells everywhere. Someone will be trying to ring Plain Bob Royal in one room, others will be listening to Surprise Sixteen in another, whilst still more attempt to put right some ringing on eight in the vestry. How can this be done?

Well it's not some kind of Doctor Who-bell-ringing cross-over, merely modern technology and perhaps a sign of things to come.

The first component of the course is on the face of

it the most interesting. Using a simulator not dissimilar to that used at the Norman Tower in Bury St Edmunds and the Abel computer program, a solitary ringer can ring anything from rounds on six to Bristol Surprise Sixteen accompanied by a computer-generated band of perfect ringers ringing at a pace set entirely by the student themselves. The idea then is to fit in with the ringing in the right place. Bereft of other actual ringers to look at, the student is forced to listen to where they place their bell in order to stay in the exact position.

A second component involves another computer, but absolutely no physical ringing. A computer-generated piece of ringing is programmed to deliberately produce bad-ringing, which the student is then challenged to make adjustments to the ringing until it is perfect.

At first glance, the third component seems fairly dull and even patronising. The student listens to various bits of ringing, initially being asked to identify how many bells are being rung but eventually testing the student's listening abilities as they attempt to pick out several samples of odd-struckness and bad striking.

With all three components used together in the one course, the student comes away from the day with a real sense of having learnt something rather than just going through the motions.

In all, thirteen students were split into three groups and put through their paces but the beauty of the simulator is that even the most experienced ringers can push themselves, thus encouraging a

number of interested members who were also invaluable with words of advice. Alan Moulton was able to ring Plain Bob Royal without having to find nine other members, whilst Winston Girling rang Cambridge Minor at a peal speed of 2 hours 20 minutes without having to worry about the other five keeping up with him!

With the morning passing particularly quickly and no real time constraints, we all piled into the village pub, The Shepherd and Dog, where the new landlord coped admirably with the large and unexpected influx of hungry and thirsty bell ringers.

Fed and watered, we returned for the afternoon session - how to ring after a pint or two in the pub! Again, everyone continued to take in and learn and despite the long journeys home to be undertaken, it was difficult to get people to leave and the day went beyond the advertised 4pm - yet it still didn't feel long enough!

My thanks and gratitude have to go to Alan McBurnie for the use of Hollesley church and for setting up the equipment needed. Also to be mentioned are Kate and Ruth Eagle for running two of the three components and for their tea duties and to Winston and Carol Girling and Alan Moulton for helping out too. Indeed a big thank you to all those who took a gamble and travelled hefty distances for something they didn't really know much about - I hope it was worth your while.

Richard Munnings

# North East News

## Congratulations to...

13 year old Philip Moyse who first handles a bell seven months before ringing the treble to a quarter peal. This was to celebrate Grandfather David's 70th Birthday in July. Both are regular service ringers at St. Margaret's, Reydon. The quarter, 540 of Gransire Doubles and 720 Plain Bob was called by 19 year old Thomas Britten.

The band was as follows

1. Philip Moyse
2. Peter Doy (Tower Captain)
3. Helen Price
4. Maggie Wolverson
5. Thomas Bitten (Conductor)
6. David Moyse

## North East Outing to London

### *Go up the 'smoke'*

Guild members of the NE District have a history of travelling in search of church bells to ring. Saturday 17th October, to London, Liverpool Street, by new train on the East Suffolk line. Ringers joined the train at Beccles, Halesworth, Darsham and Ipswich. The Train

was on time at Liverpool Street and in a few minutes we have walked to the first tower of the day; St Botolph's Bishopsgate (8 bells, 17 cwt).

Not easy to ring due to tower movement but all good experience, there are not many towers where the bells 'drop' on you with such spiteful regularity as here—just as they did 60 years ago. These bells survived the blitz intact—shame in some ways. The doors of the ringing room open onto flat roofs thus, giving a grand overview of the City and all the building work in progress. Six tower cranes at work on the new sites all close to the tower helping to raise new office blocks of unbelievable height and elegance.

Some of the party remembered the City of the 1930's when much of it was as it was rebuilt after the accidental Great Fire of London—with, of course, Victorian additions. Then, again, in the 1940's as it was after the deliberate Fire of London by the German Air Force; St Paul's Cathedral standing like an island in a sea of ruined, burnt and flattened buildings. We saw it rebuilt in the 1960's—lots of monolithic concrete slabs of buildings. Now we have seen it being re-modelled again; higher and rather beautiful. But buildings still stand beside streets that Pepys would recognise and possibly the Romans as well!

We lowered these bells, important to ring again on the glorious 24cwt 8 at St Lawrence next the Guildhall. So we dive into the roads and alleys for the 10 minute walk. These are a great ring and go like tops. Cast and hung by Taylors after the war to replace a lost ring they get my vote.

Next, in the shadow of St Pauls, the 16cwt 6 bells of St Vedast, Foster Lane. Again, put in after the war, this majestic, slow turning six gave a lot of pleasure. Coffee, it would seem, is used for bearing cooling here. Oh well...

Lunch break. An hour and three quarters to explore the City. Some found 'The Old London' on Ludgate Hill and settled for good food and Young's beer. Plenty of room—as usual on a Saturday. Rather different during the working days! For us, from the pub, a quick walk to see the river, waterside buildings, City of London School, Tate Modern and all the new, to us, high rise buildings of the City before plodding off to St Olaves, Hart Street.

This Church is still allied to Trinity House and famous for being the Parish church of Samuel Pepys. Into the small, colourful garden—all that's left of the churchyard perhaps—cross it to the open tower door. Up the winding stairs and soon into the crowded ringing room to try out again this handy 11 cwt peal of 8, a favourite of mine, now rung by the University of London Society.

Fifteen minutes later into St Botolph's, Aldgate tower to battle with another heavy 25cwt peal of 8. My personal opinion is that if Sir Christopher Wren had been a ringer he would have built his church towers a bit more solid so they didn't wobble. We rang them as well as any band, but I thought that the bells won this round.

Off on another 10 minute walk to Christchurch Spitalfield and the superb 17cwt 8. This church was one of the later ones to get the 'war damage' treatment.

The church is high, the tower is massive; no way was this one going to give us any trouble. It didn't. these bells provided an opportunity for some of the best change ringing of the day. The bells rang themselves and I felt I could ring all day. A recent peal board suggested it was possible; a record length 12, 000 plus changes of London Surprise Major took them a day!

Six o'clock and another party of ringers expected, so we leave down the circular stairs, then the wonderful oak staircase into the crypt up and into the street. Returning, down Pettycoat Lane, to Liverpool Street, which houses a very user friendly pub run by Wetherspoons. Where better to wait for the train home?

We thought this would be a good day out, but it was better than that. It was a very, very good day out! A great way to meet with friends, ring, visit and see the beautifully kept interiors of historic churches and see something of the new London—all without driving a car!

Out thanks to the kind folk who gave up time to travel in from the suburbs and open the towers for us; not many can now live in the City.

Our grateful THANKS to Richard and Julie for the clockwork arrangements and for devising the scheme in the first place. Perhaps as I write they are already planning a similar one fore next year!

HOPE SO!!!!

*Don Price*

## **A message from little Crane**

A strange thing is happening. I've seen a lot of things in my lifetime - I've already managed to get rid of that Blair bloke, I've chewed my first backstroke and I've called my first touch of Stedman, although none of the bobs or singles were in the wrong place.

But all of a sudden, bright lights have sprung up. Someone keeps putting trees indoors which seem to get in the way. I think it must be that fat bloke in the red suit who must be ancient. Apparently he creeps into people's houses in the middle of the night and nicks their mince pies and sherry. Obviously that's not illegal anymore. Daddy and Aunty Ruthie have developed an addiction to chocolate in the morning - they just open a little door each day and a chocolate pops out. Brilliant!

These old blokes are 'wheeled out' (daddies words) at this time of year and sing these old songs. I haven't heard them before though. One bloke sounds like he wishes he could have crisps n' nuts everyday. Don't what that's about.

There are lots of parties going on - daddies work has to have one, all the bell ringers have to have one, all his and Aunty Ruthie's friends have to have one. Daddy keeps coming home walking a bit like me.

There also seems to be a lot more bell ringing going on - I didn't think that was possible. But everyone is smiling more, which is nice. Daddy says it's really important for people to help as

much as possible, but he thinks it's important to enjoy the social side too. I hope you understand what that means, 'cos I don't know what he's going on about.

And the funniest thing is it all seems to be named after my Uncle Chris. He must be more important than I thought.

Apparently all this is going to be good fun and I like the sound of these present things I'm going to be getting. Anyway, I hope everyone else has a very good Uncle Christmas and enjoy the time of this good bloke Will.

Mason Crane (9 months)

PS Daddy and Aunty Ruthie say Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to everyone!

## ST LAMBERT'S LECTURES

How did five bells become ten.....  
Why the unusual wooden belfry?

For the answers, come along to St Mary & St Lambert's Church Stonham Aspal, 7.30pm Friday 14 March 2008. George Pipe will be telling us about church bells and bellringing in general and the ten bells in Stonham Aspal tower in particular.

This is of special interest, as following recent repairs to our bellframe, all ten bells can now be rung again. We are grateful for financial assistance from the Suffolk Guild of Ringers and other sources.

Our church is warm and welcoming and a buffet supper with a glass of wine will be provided.

Tickets £7.50 (please book in advance) are available from John Ince 01449 711365  
All proceeds will be used for further church repairs and improvement.