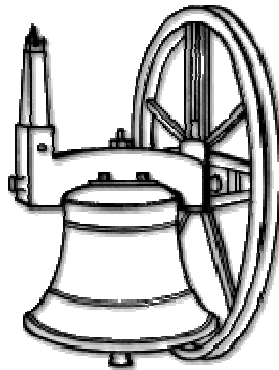


April 2007

The Bedfordshire Clanger



Biggleswade District Newsletter

The Biggleswade district usually meets for ringing on the second Saturday in each month at 3.30pm. Details of upcoming events are listed on the following pages.

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Contents

District Committee for 2007.....	3
Editorial	3
Dates for your Diary	4
District Outing – Saturday 12 th May	4
District Striking Competition – Saturday 9 th June.....	4
Greensand Ridge Open Day – Saturday 8 th September.....	5
District Training	5
Recent Events.....	5
District AGM – 13 th January	5
Bedfordshire Association 125 th Anniversary Dinner – 17 th March	6
Two firsts and a two-thousandth	6
Advanced Practice – Eaton Socon, 31 st March.....	8
Campton - At Last, They're In!!!.....	8
Bits and Bobs.....	12
New Bellringing Internet Forum.....	12
Ampthill – Special 7 and 8 Bell Practice	12

District Committee for 2007

	Name	Tower	Telephone
Chairman	Sue Silver	unattached	07850 793847
Vice-Chairman	Mike Matthews	Eaton Socon	01480 212838
Secretary	Elizabeth Overfield	Arlesey	01462 815672
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	John Parsons	Meppershall	01462 813333
	Alan Smith	Biggleswade	01767 313521

Other Officers

BRF Independent Examiner	Mrs M Mann	Maulden	
Ronald J Sharp Bell Fund Rep	Mr J Parsons	Meppershall	
Tower Secretary (ex officio)	Terry Brown	Clifton	01462 631057

Editorial

What a packed issue! There's been a lot going on around the District (see 'Recent Events') and more coming up for you to enjoy – the Annual Car Outing is coming up and now is the time to start thinking about putting a band together for the Striking Competition (see 'Dates for your Diary').

It's two years since I started editing the Clanger, and I would like to thank all the people who regularly contribute articles. Without you there wouldn't be a Clanger! To the rest of you out there, why not put an article together about your Tower, any ringing events you've been part of or anything else that might be of interest. I'd love to hear from you! Please send articles, ideas for items to go into the Clanger and any feedback, questions or ideas about the District or the Clanger to Jackie O'Regan either by post or by emailing bedfordshire.clanger@ntlworld.com.

Remember you can get additional copies of the Clanger, please pass the message on to anyone who might be interested – the annual subscription is £4 a year (£1 per issue); please submit orders to the Editor!

Dates for your Diary

21st April	Great Barford : tea	-	Eaton Socon
12th May	District Outing – "Route 1040"		
9th June	District Striking Competition – Arleseay		
14th July	Southill	-	tea : Northill
11th August	Tempsford – evening ringing only from 6pm		

Ringling for the standard two tower District Meeting is from 3:30pm. Tea is generally around 5:00-5:30pm and is followed by evening ringling.

District Outing - Saturday 12th May

This year's annual car outing is "Route 1040". Ringling has been arranged at five towers during the day, and there is an optional curry afterwards at the Akbar in Eaton Socon (booking via Philip Rogers please on 01767 680086).

10:45-11:30	Crowland, Abbey Church	6	9.2.8
12:00-12:45	Whittlesey, St Mary	8	18.2.0
	<i>- lunch at Whittlesey -</i>		
15:00-15:45	Whittlesey, St Andrew	8	19.0.13
16:15-17:00	Warboys, St Mary Magdalene	6	11.0.0
17:30-18:15	Hemingford Grey, St James	8	11.2.13
	<i>- optional curry at Eaton Socon -</i>		

Philip will be distributing posters to display in your Tower, which also include route notes and map references on the reverse.

District Striking Competition - Saturday 9th June

We would love to see more bands entering this year – a poster is included with this issue of the Clanger to put up in your Tower and hopefully encourage lots of ringers to take part!

Any Tower that can get together a band of six Sunday Service ringers is invited to enter. If you don't think you're up to doing a Doubles or Minor method for the competition you can ring rounds. The top two teams ringling a method go forward to the Association competition on 15th September (for which the ringers must also be Association members) and there is a Rounds Cup for the best team ringling rounds.

Even if you are not entering a band in the Striking Competition, you are welcome to come along, enjoy the ringling and partake in the buffet tea. Please either complete the slip at the bottom of the poster and return it to Sue Silver, call Sue on 07850 793847 or email sue.silver@btinternet.com with band entries and/or numbers for the tea.

Greensand Ridge Open Day - Saturday 8th September

An Open Day is being organised by the Biggleswade District to raise money for the Bell Restoration Funds of the Biggleswade and Luton Districts. It is hoped that over 25 towers in these districts will be open for general ringing, with a route broadly following the Greensand Ridge through Bedfordshire, from the A1 to the M1. Each tower will be open for 1 hour. A highlight will undoubtedly be the opportunity to ring on the new eight at Campton.

Refreshments will be available at various towers, including lunchtime refreshments (sandwiches, cakes and drink) at Campton. Further details will be published in due course, but do please support us and put the date in your diaries now! For further details please contact Linda Garton on 01462 819074 or linda.garton@btconnect.com.

District Training

Are you a rounds and call change ringer, who would like to start to ring methods? Do you wish to learn a new method? Or do you simply wish to work on a method you are already ringing? Bob Werrett, Anthony Smith or any committee member, would like to hear from you so that we can plan a District training programme.

For more advanced ringers, Sue Spencer is organising a Surprise Major practice on every 5th Saturday – 31st March, 30th June, 29th September and 29th December 2007, at Eaton Socon. There is a small charge of £3 per ringer for this event, which will be donated to Eaton Socon church funds. If you would like to attend one of these practices, please contact Sue Spencer on 01480 476068 or email sue@scswilkinson.freeserve.co.uk for details.

Please see the article in "Recent Events" about the first advanced practice.

Recent Events

District AGM - 13th January

The AGM was held at Henlow this year. A good variety of methods were rung both before and after the tea and meeting, including Plain Bob Triples and Major, Grandsire Triples, Double Norwich, Stedman, Cambridge Major and Yorkshire.

The meeting was very well attended and everyone enjoyed the tea and the ringing.

Bedfordshire Association 125th Anniversary Dinner - 17th March

96 ringers and friends attended the 125th Anniversary Dinner of the Bedfordshire Association of Church Bell Ringers, which was held at Silsoe on 17th March 2007.

When we arrived we were greeted with a glass of sherry, wine or fruit juice.

The first course was melon cocktail, followed by pan roasted chicken breast with vegetables. The dessert was strawberry cheesecake, which was followed by cheese and biscuits, and tea or coffee. There was a vegetarian option for the main course.

The Toastmaster for the evening was Derek Hammond, President of the Association from 1985-89 and 1998-2003. The toast to Her Majesty the Queen was proposed by Wendy Piercy, President of the Association.

The toast to the Church was proposed by Bob Churchill, Vice President and Honorary Life Member of the Association, with one of his excellent verses. The response to this toast was given by Rev K Brooke Lunn, Past Master of the Ancient Society of College Youths (1973) and member of St Paul's Cathedral Guild. He entertained us with an amusing potted history of the Association from its earliest times.

The toast to the Guests and Visitors was proposed by Anthony Smith, President of the Association from 1981-1985, and the response was by Chris Pickford, Librarian of the Association (1979-1986) and Past Master of the Ancient Society of College Youths (2001). Both regaled us by delving deeply and extensively into their personal memories of the Association's more recent activities.

During the meal, The Huddersfield University Clarinet Trio, comprising Hayley Fry, Sarah White and Jen Hewitt, played a selection of light classical music. A pleasant and unobtrusive background that created a relaxing atmosphere.

Later in the evening a group of five handbell ringers under the direction of John Loveless, rang three leads of Kent Treble Bob Royal on handbells.

The occasion was an excellent event, which was organised by the Association Secretary, Sarah Louise Ward.

by Beth Overfield

Two firsts and a two-thousandth

Congratulations to Simon and Sue Melvin who rang their first peal, Plain Bob Major, at Meldreth on Saturday March 24. To have rung your first peal only two years after starting to learn is very good going by anyone's reckoning. If you add in that they are both in their 40's - and all the experts say learning gets harder once you leave spring chickendom behind - then this is a very unusual achievement indeed.

How have they done it? Well no doubt there's been more than a little competition between them along the way to spur them along. From the relatively little I've rung with them it's clear they bring to their ringing huge levels of commitment and enthusiasm - they **will** succeed, it's just when, not if. They acknowledge the

help they've been given by very many people in the area, particularly at Northhill (where they live and ring on Sundays and on practice nights), Biggleswade (where they were taught to ring by Anthony Smith, Wednesday night practice) and Henlow (Tuesday night practice), but of course now they bring positive input to three towers and Sue is now District Belfry Repair Fund Treasurer, a very important role given the replenishment activity required in years to come.

Now, let's talk about Anthony Smith for a minute. I was told this piece should be about Simon and Sue, and so far it has been, but 2000 peals is a great achievement in itself. Anthony's peals have been spread over 45 years, with the first and second thousands taking a similar time – if he was a batsman we'd talk about him being 'a model of consistency'. Apart from peal ringing, he has made a huge contribution to the ringing careers of many individuals, to the Biggleswade District over this time and to the Bedfordshire Association as well – he was President during its Centenary Year. I regularly try to keep a check on his total (subtle questions like 'how long before the 2000 now then?' or 'if it was me I think I'd try to speed up a bit!') so I knew the 2000 was on the horizon.

As Anthony's 1000th peal back in 1984 had been Clive's first, Linda and I privately hatched the idea (betya!) that Sue and Simon's first and Anthony's 2000th might well happen in the same peal. Sure enough, there was soon a date (for the 2000th that is), March 24th. I believe we suggested combining the two events to be a thoroughly good idea. The expectation (well ours!) grew when we



Simon and Sue Melvin, and Anthony Smith

were invited to ring in 'a long touch' of Bob Major at Biggleswade, then a quarter at Meldreth in mid February, and finally a quarter at Biggleswade on Sunday, March 18th.

The action shifted to Meldreth again for the 24th. We were elsewhere and were thrilled to get the text message confirming success and even more impressed with the details of Sue's blister count! Round to Anthony and Charlotte's for a super evening: Shannon Bitter to start, Roast Beef and all the trimmings, Jerusalem Artichokes from the garden etc.

A memorable day for those involved – thank you!

by John Loveless

Advanced Practice - Eaton Socon, 31st March

The first quarterly advanced practice took place on Saturday 31st March and was attended by about 20 people from many Associations and Districts. The ringing was led very ably by Graham Hall, to whom I am very grateful, and methods rang ranged from Stedman Triples to 8 Spliced Surprise Major. Due to the number of more experienced ringers attending it meant that “learners” could be supported with a strong band around them, and I think that many people benefited from this and made some good progress.

I would like to thank everyone who attended the first practice and hope that you will put the future dates in your diaries. If you would like to attend in future please let Sue Spencer know in advance if possible, (sue@scswilkinson.freemove.co.uk or 01480 476068) or just turn up with your homework done and an aim in mind!!

by Sue Spencer

Future Dates of the Advanced Practice:

June 30th 10am–noon

Sept 29th 10am–noon

Dec 29th 10am–noon



Campton - At Last, They're In!!!

The bells arrived at Campton on Friday, March 9, an exciting day for all involved. We have always had plenty of people willing to help, and a number of volunteers helped unload the new bells (plus three old ones!), frame, wheels, stays, sliders, bolts and what seemed a huge weight of silver-coloured cast iron girders from White's lorry over the church wall and into the church. The Biggleswade Chronicle sent a photographer who spent half an hour or so taking shots of the bells and church – the shot he eventually chose for the paper featured a bell attached to a crane, set against a beautiful blue sky, with Anthony Smith, cup of tea in hand, taking a well earned rest from his voluntary labour duties! This caused comment!!

Installing a new ring of bells is a pretty unusual occurrence – in Bedfordshire it's happened only a couple of times in the last 20 years. We knew the bells would only be in the church for a few days before going up into the tower to be hung



Barrie Glenn (Peals Appeal Grants person, whose efforts generated over £28,000 of grants) and John Loveless

for ringing – and that most people would never see them again. So we couldn't waste the best PR opportunity we would ever have.

In the event, the Open Days on March 10/11 saw 150 people visit Campton to see the new bells, which were now lined up on pallets in the nave of the church. A photographic display, recently updated by Linda, showed the progress of the Bells Appeal from its launch on Jan 1 2004, how the money has been raised, through to the new bells being cast in June 2006, and the old bells and frame leaving the tower in Sept 2006.

The new bells, together with their bright blue headstocks, wheels (fantastic to behold for those who've never seen this sort of craftsmanship before) and other fittings close by, generated great interest, as did the inscriptions on their bells. Three of the old bells were on display - these are being kept in the tower as they are historically significant. The notion that these were cast nearly 500 years ago, probably in the churchyard, seemed to capture the imagination of many visitors. People really seemed to respond to it, which is what we'd hoped for. It looks like we have found four recruits as well! We even collected £100 or so through tea/cakes/donations.



the sixth, given by the Biggleswade District

The main girders were installed, together with the old three bells in the top frame, on March 12 and 13, phase 1. These girders are massive, very heavy and very cumbersome to move, particularly once they are to be positioned up in the tower. Ian Pearce of BBC Three Counties Radio interviewed Graham Clifton, White's bellhanger, and myself, and this went out on April 1. He later came back for a second interview on the day of the try-out. (Currently, April 15, these are both on the BBC 3CR website at:

www.bbc.co.uk/threecounties/content/articles/2007/03/12/camptonbells_feature.shtml)



The bells were blessed at the 11.15am service on Mothering Sunday, March 18. The 'buzz' as we entered the church on that Sunday was incredible. Some 'hazards' needed to be overcome over the next few days as there was a Benefice Service on March 20, for which, fortunately, the bells could remain in the Nave, followed by a funeral on March 27, for which they were moved into the North and South Aisles using the lifting trolley we had persuaded White's to leave with us!

Finally, on Monday, April 2, Phase 2, the final stage, commenced, whereby the frame and new bells were hoisted into position and fixtures/fittings added to complete the job. The girders had been concreted-in over the previous two weeks. The Kings Lynn concreting saga had been played out at length in the Ringing World during

February/March so the theme of concreting-in had assumed a significance far ahead of what I'd expected. I'd love a pint for every time Brian White had told the builder the concrete mix was to be '6 to 1' and needed to be 'fully vibrated'! No problems (as far as we know) with our concreting-in!

Progress was rapid from a standing start on the first day, but soon slowed once a small tower was gradually filled with 6 bells in the lower frame with another 2 to go on top, to add to the old three already there. Everything had to go up in the right order and space was confined. In fact it seemed to get less - exponentially!

By Wednesday afternoon the only limiting factor to ringing all 8 was the presence of only 5 ringers, so we tried out the front five and back five - marvellous!! Thursday morning saw the drilling of the rope holes in the clock room floor and installation of the rope guides. White's are proud - and I am delighted - that none of the ropes are drawn (ie they all drop directly from wheel to floor) and that the rope circle is fine too, all a pretty



Thomas and Alex Keech with the bell given by Andrew/Ros Keech and Stan/Sheila Ashton

tall order when you have a ring of eight on two levels in a very small tower.

The first ringing of the new bells was on April 5 at 3pm and was attended by about 25 people, including local ringers, regular visitors and donors of bells. The culmination of over three years fundraising effort to which a huge number of people have contributed – thank you all. Lots to do still in terms of internal acoustics, external sound control, the ringing environment, but the bells are everything we'd hoped for.



Linda Garton and John Loveless – chuffed to bits!

On Easter Sunday we had 11 ringers present, including our current group of 11-12 year olds who have been visiting other local towers on a Tuesday night. Thank you more people, particularly Brian Oertel at Haynes, whose tower was adopted as our second home, and others who have accommodated us over the last 6 months. It was also pleasing that some who learnt to ring 4-5 years ago and, facing GCSE pressures, opted to take a rest whilst we had no bells, were back.

The dedication will be on Sunday, July 1. In the interim we will be ringing on Sundays (usually 10.30am for 11.15am service), Tuesday nights at 7.15pm, and as always we welcome visitors.

by John Loveless

Bits and Bobs

New Bellringing Internet Forum

An email has been circulated about a new web-based chat and bulletin board devoted entirely to bellringing, created by a ringer called Terry White.



Currently there are forums entitled 'The Ringing Chamber', 'Method Ringing', 'Community Chat', 'My Tower' and 'Tower Maintenance'. Terry also says: "Under the

category of 'My Tower' You also have the the ability to create individual board spaces for specific towers, guilds or any other such similar grouping. You just need to email me with the names of 4no. registered members along with the details of the Tower or Guild etc and I will add the board for you. This will appear in the board under a separate category called 'My Tower'. No other member in the wider forum, except myself as Administrator will have access to your board which you can use as you see fit. To discuss practices, tower issues, methods to be rung or it could even be a local community board just linked to your own tower or guild."

Amphill - Special 7 and 8 Bell Practice

Amphill is opening its Tower doors to visiting bellringers on the first Wednesday of every month for a special seven and eight bell practice.

Perhaps you come from a six bell tower and would like the chance to ring on higher numbers. Maybe you would like to practise your ropesight on seven or eight bells. Perhaps you can ring competently on these numbers but rarely get the chance to do so. Whatever your circumstances, a very warm welcome awaits you at Amphill on the first Wednesday evening of every month, when we set aside our usual practice for a special seven and eight bell session open to everyone.

What we ring will depend on the mix of ringers - we are happy to go with Plain Hunt, Bob, Grandsire, Stedman or Erin Triples; Bob, Little Bob or perhaps Kent Major or Surprise Major!

The first such practice was held on Wednesday 11th April (the second Wednesday of the month because of Holy Week, just to confuse!), and we were very pleased with the outcome. If you might be interested in joining us some time, please send an email to jackie@amphillringers.org.uk and we can send you a reminder email about the special practice each month.

Jackie O'Regan