

HEADSTOCK

The Newsletter of the
Bedford District of the
Bedfordshire Association of Church Bell Ringers

July 2015

Web Version

This version of Headstock has photographs with reduced quality.

It also has contact details of people removed.
Personal contact details can be found in your Tower's copy of
Headstock, or in the latest Annual Report.

Bedford District Programme of Meetings and Events 2015

This is a provisional programme, for confirmation see The Ringing World or phone the Secretary, Bob Jones.

4 July 2015:	Turvey Quarterly District Meeting Afternoon Ringing, Picnic Tea, 6.00 pm Business Meeting Evening Ringing	3.30 – 8.30 pm
1 Aug 2015:	Bletsoe Morning Ringing	10.00 am – 12 noon
5 Sept 2015:	Stevington Evening Ringing	7.30 – 9.00 pm
12 Sept 2015	Beds & Herts Bike 'n' Hike (t.b.c.)	
19 Sept 2015	Haynes: Association Striking Contests Melville Cup Young Ringers St Peter's Cup Association 6-Bell	3.30 pm 5.00 pm
3 Oct 2015:	Bromham Quarterly District Meeting Afternoon Ringing, Service, Tea, 6.00 pm Business Meeting Evening Ringing	3.30 – 8.30 pm

Future Events

16 Jan 2016:	Biddenham Annual District Meeting Afternoon Ringing, Service, Tea, 6.00 pm Business Meeting Evening Ringing	4.00 – 9.00 pm
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Young Ringers' Events

11 July 2015:	Oxford, National Young Ringers' Striking Competition	
August 2015:	Various Towers in the Bedford District Young Ringers' Practices	

District Outing – Saturday 2 May 2015

This year's outing took us on a swift jaunt up the A1 to the Stamford/Peterborough area on a somewhat overcast and cool day.

Our first tower was in the beautiful stone built village of Easton-on-the-Hill. The bells are a lovely six in an airy church containing old box pews, some with their original rush matting liners. Here we rang our first Cambridge of the day.



Thornhaugh was the next tower. Decorative hanging baskets caught the eye on entering the village, and a plaque commemorating its achievements in the Best Kept Village competition. Although A1 traffic noise was in evidence there was a lovely cherry blossom tree in the church yard



and kindly provided tea and coffee inside, accompanied by Jenny and Adrienne's cake and biscuits. The bells were a pleasant light ring of five in a comfortable ringing chamber, and a cosy church. At one point the local ringing master appeared to say villagers had asked him if we were ringing for the royal birth! Up to that point we were unaware of the event!



In the chancel is the fine Russell Monument of 1613. This is the tomb of William, Lord Russell of Thornhaugh, the ancestor of the present Duke of Bedford.

On then to Wansford, another lovely spot with a beautiful bridge over the River Nene dating from about 1600.

The bells in St Mary's are a very nice light six. We rang our first "official" Cambridge for Kate and William's new baby here!

For lunch some headed to the river bank and a picnic whilst others set off for the Angel pub in Yarwell, a cosy (although not overly warm), quirky, busy, and friendly establishment with many angel wings decorating the walls and mantel shelves, and good pub food.



Our next church was just across the road. An unusual looking building because, in 1782, the north and south aisles collapsed, leaving open arches on the outside of the structure. These were duly walled up, windows inserted, and that's what you see today.

Further calamity was to strike during our visit! Thankfully most people had rung minimus on the bells when the rope on the second bell snapped. Earlier there had been much discussion about what methods to ring on four, but now we were one down! Stedman Singles was gallantly attempted before we eventually called it a day.

In the chancel is the tomb of Humphrey Bellamy, thought to be the inspiration for the Dick Whittington Story.

Our penultimate tower was in the stone built village of Alwalton on the outskirts of Peterborough. The occasional lorry horn mingled with the sound of bells here as Truckfest was being prepared nearby, and getting into the ringing chamber proved a challenge as the tower steps didn't meet up with the door!

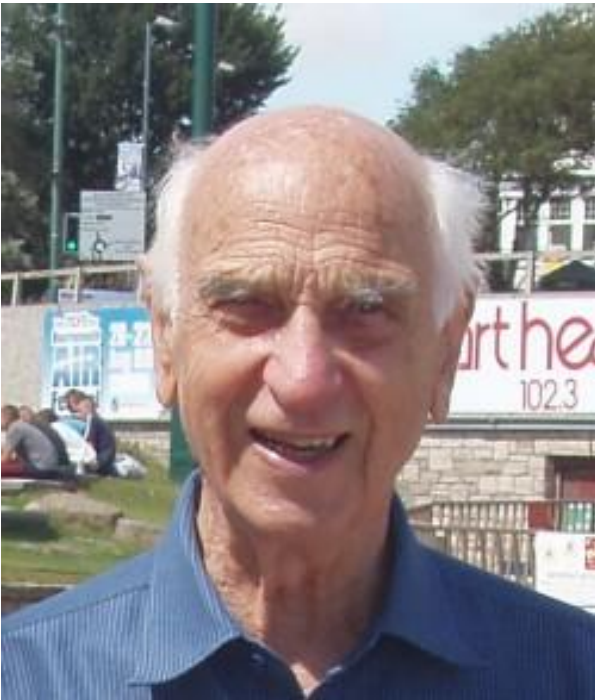
The same step problem was evident at our next tower, although to a lesser extent. This was in Warmington. The church of St Mary the Virgin has a 13th century timber ceiling which is a simulation of stone built barrel vaulting, and a fine ring of six bells, our heaviest of the day with a 11-0-25 tenor. Here we rang our finest Cambridge and Stedman of the day.

An excellent dinner was provided for us at the very pleasant Stilton Cheese pub in Stilton. Good job we weren't there on the Monday as the road was closed for May Day Cheese-Rolling!

Many thanks to Adrienne for organising the whole occasion: interesting towers, in lovely countryside, and with fine refreshments.

Martin Goodwin

W Ralph West (1921 – 2015)



Ralph West passed away peacefully at home on 8th March 2015 aged 93 years. He was a member of the Bedfordshire Association of Church Bell Ringers from 1976 to 2011 and Tower Captain at Biddenham for many years. He rang one peal (a peal of Grandsire Triples on 14th June 1987 which was the first peal on the eight bells at Biddenham following their augmentation from six to eight bells). A memorial service celebrating Ralph's life took place at Christ Church, Denmark Street, Bedford, the church where Ralph worshipped, on 13th April 2015 and

his ashes were interred in Biddenham Churchyard on 18th April 2015; a quarter peal of Grandsire Triples was rung on the bells at Biddenham during the interment.

Ralph was a founder member of the Biddenham Handbell Ringers with friend and neighbour Anthea Slark who wrote the following obituary which is reproduced here with permission from Anthea and the editors of The Loop (formerly Biddenham Bulletin).

Richard Hillson

We are sad to report the death of Ralph West on 8th March 2015. Ralph was one of the oldest residents in Biddenham and lived in the village all his life. He was born at 45 Main Road and attended the (old) village school remembering the very fierce Rev (Billy) Norman who visited once a month. Afterwards he attended the Modern School and left in 1938 to join GPO telephones on a two year apprenticeship. In 1943 he was called up but spent most of the war at Catterick Camp where he taught communications to new recruits. Back in Bedford he continued his career as a telephone engineer progressing through the organisation to become Head of Customer Installation UK until his retirement in 1983. Also in 1943 he married Megan and bought the plot of land at 13 Church End, eventually having a house built in which he lived until his more recent move to Day's Lane. Megan died in 1998

following many years with disabling arthritis. Ralph cared for her faithfully throughout often inventing equipment to make her life easier. Ralph has a son, Nick, three grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Music was Ralph's greatest interest; he has always played the violin, leading the Bedford Symphony Orchestra at one time. His father and grandfather were tower bell ringers (at Biddenham), although he did not start until he was in his 50s and later became Tower Captain. Together with Anthea Slark he set up the Biddenham Handbell Ringers in 1991 and was both Chairman and Musical Director for many years.

After Megan's death Ralph was able to indulge his passion for travel and visited all five continents, often on cruises. During travels in America he met Sue and following a long distance romance and many obstacles in the form of British Immigration officialdom they were eventually married in July 2013. Sue has cared for Ralph wonderfully during his final years and they shared a strong Christian faith. The church was very important to him, both St James's, Biddenham and Christ Church, Denmark Street, and he hosted a weekly bible study meeting at his house.

In spite of age and infirmity Ralph remained mentally active until the end always interested in everything, a good conversationalist with no apparent memory loss. He described himself as a 'gadgets guy' and kept up to date with the latest electronic equipment.

Anthea Slark interviewed him for the Biddenham Bulletin magazine in 2011. When asked what piece of advice he would like to pass on he replied – 'read your bible – it's full of good advice on how to lead your life' (Ralph read through the whole bible every year). In answer to the question – how would you like to be remembered he said 'He lived a Christian life to the full'. What better epitaph for Ralph.

We extend our sympathy to his wife Sue, his son Nick, and the rest of his family.

Anthea Slark

The Bedfordshire Association of Church Bell Ringers
Annual General Meeting on 16 May 2015 at Leighton Buzzard

The President, Sue Silver, welcomed everyone to the meeting and congratulated the Bedfordshire team and their helpers who had won the Ringing World National Youth Striking Contest for the second year running. Those present stood to remember those who had died since the last AGM: Patricia Woolhead, a member from Aspley Guise, and two former members Ron Freeman of Kempston and Wootton, and Ralph West of Biddenham.

Minor corrections were made to the Minutes of the 2014 AGM at Biggleswade, and the 2014 Annual Report, after which they were approved, as were the 2014 Accounts.

All Officers were re-elected and they remain as follows:

President:	Sue Silver
Vice-President:	Pat Albon
Honorary Secretary:	Terry Brown
Honorary Treasurer:	Barbara Fraser
Honorary Peal Secretary:	Anthony Smith
Honorary Librarian:	Pat Albon

Honorary Independent Examiner of Accounts: Richard Hillson.

Rosemary Drewery is Safeguarding Co-ordinator. Christine Williams wishes to be replaced as Web Master in February 2016, and Sue Silver will resign her post as a Central Council Representative in 2016.

There will be no change to subscriptions next year. A change was passed to clarify Rule 19 that under-19 subscriptions are not paid into the Association Bell Fund. A new member was elected: Ann Clark of Aspley Guise.

There was a nomination for election as an Honorary Life Member: Alan Smith of Biggleswade, proposed by Martin Major and seconded by Beth Overfield. Martin's nomination speech is included opposite. The proposal was carried unanimously.

Sarah Ward mentioned Miriam Clark, ringer and Tower Captain at Elstow for over 50 years, she has also held various district and Association officer positions. There was a special surprise service for her on 21 June at Elstow.

The paper "Change Ringing for the Future" sent to the Association's Central Council representatives (Sue Silver, Richard Horne and Pat Albon) was discussed, it can be downloaded from the Association website.

Linda Garton mentioned the Central Council's "First Peal 2015" initiative, to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the first "true" peal being rung. If you would like to ring your first peal but don't have anyone to help you, you can contact Sue Silver at president@bacr.co.uk.

In 2016 the Association AGM will be held on 21 May at 6.00 pm at St Paul's Bedford, and the Association Striking Competitions will be on 17 September at Eaton Bray in the Luton District.

Sue gave thanks for the service, church and the provision of tea.

Honorary Life Membership Nomination of Alan Smith

The person I would like to propose as an Honorary Life Member of the Bedfordshire Association was elected as a member in 1949 and rang his first peal inside to Plain Bob Minor later that year.

He has been a stalwart of ringing in Bedfordshire, particularly the Biggleswade District. He was Association Secretary from 1963-1969 and Treasurer from 1975-1979 and in the Biggleswade District held the post of Secretary from 1959-1963, Ringing Master from 1979-1985 and on the District Committee from 1972-2005 and a dedicated member of the Biggleswade band to date. Some 66 years of service.

It gives me great pleasure to put forward the name of Alan Smith.

For many years during the 60s and 70s Alan organised and ran a weekly practice at towers around the District including arranging transport where necessary. These practices gave many ringers the opportunity to improve their ringing. He has always been a great supporter of fund raising for the District over the years and a regular helper with his family at the District Christmas Social and many other events.

Alan, along with his wife Sheila, have taught many to ring including their daughters Elaine and Yvonne and younger brother Anthony.

He was also a founder member of 'Bedfordshire Young Ringers' during the 1950s. Incidentally the young 'uns still have re-unions! Alan has not been a prolific peal ringer having rung 136 for the Association but he has been and still is an example to anyone for his easy-going nature, his service and his dedication to ringing in the county.

Martin Major

Report of Bedford Quarterly District Meeting on 18 April 2015

The meeting took place at All Saints' Church in Riseley. Andrew Dennison chaired it in the absence of Alex Nash and thanked Revd Martin Bailey for his warm welcome, for conducting the service, and for the use of the facilities, Derek Hammond for playing the organ, and all those who provided the tea.

The deaths of two long-serving members, Ralph West from Biddenham and Ron Freeman from Kempston were recorded. Both had retired from ringing some years ago, but had contributed much in their younger days. The meeting stood in silence in their memory.

Emails from Association Secretary Terry Brown, and the CCCBR President Chris Mew's blog, had been forwarded to tower contacts. The BRF stood at £16,865.59 with no outstanding grants or requests.

The Association General Committee report stated that it had been debated at length whether the grant to St Andrew's Biggleswade for sound-proofing complied with the rules of the RJ Sharp Fund. This grant of £9,000 followed a grant of £4,000 in 2012 for the purchase of the necessary equipment for the ringing centre. Finally a vote had confirmed that the correct procedures had been followed. At this District meeting Stephen Stanford questioned whether the members should have been informed about the matter beforehand, rather than as a fait accompli, after discussion no motion was proposed as to changing the procedure as Association Rule changes would be required.

Recent activities and the future programme were reported on.

David Shaw of Riseley was re-elected as a member. George Saunders, of St Paul's Bedford and Clapham, was elected as a new member.

District Striking Contest Held on 6 June 2015

The Bedford District Striking Competition was held on the newly rehung 11-0-16 cwt six at St Mary, Bletsoe. Eight teams took part: three ringing rounds and five ringing a method. The judges were Bob and Elizabeth Churchill of Husborne Crawley, the hosts were the Bletsoe ringers and Andrew Dennison was the organiser. The results were as follows:

Position	Bands Ringing a Method	Faults
1	Kempston	13
2	Bromham	18
3	St Peter's Bedford	30
4	St Andrew's Bedford	40
5	Sharnbrook	45

Position	Bands Ringing Rounds	Faults
1	Oakley	27
2	Goldington	41
3	Felmersham	75

Kempston and Bromham go through to the Association Striking Contest at Haynes on 19 September where they will be up against Biggleswade and Eaton Socon from the Biggleswade District contest at Potton, and Linslade and Dunstable from the Luton District contest at Flitwick.



Andrew Keech of Kempston
receiving their cups from Andrew Dennison (on the right)



Bill Sellars of Oakley

Tailenders' Report 2015

We were ringing at Odell in May on a lovely sunny day. The bells are rung from behind the organ and although they are loud for the ringers, they go reasonably well and sound good outside.



After ringing the six bells up we went straight into a very decent 120 of Grandsire doubles. This was followed by rounds and call changes, Plain Bob minor, Cambridge minor and two further touches of Grandsire. The method ringing was generally well

struck with the Cambridge sounding very nice indeed.

Lunch was at The Queen's Head in Milton Ernest. We were served very promptly and the food was extremely good value at £9.99 for two main courses. The guest beer was also very well received.



Many thanks go to Barbara Woplin for organising today's meeting so efficiently.

Our June meeting was at Buckden in Cambridgeshire. The weather was not what one would hope for in June, but the showers stopped as we arrived.



The church is a lovely light church, reminiscent of the churches in the Fens. The bells were interesting with the first four being almost the same weight. They felt quite heavy round the front and we felt that they were best rung quite slowly. There was some good steady ringing of simple methods including Plain Bob doubles and minor, and Grandsire doubles as well as a course of Stedman doubles before the lower in peal.

Lunch was at The Lion Hotel and it was a very good meal. The food at The Lion is always of high quality and Humphrey had managed to negotiate a special price of £10 for two courses which made it extremely good value.

Many thanks to Humphrey for making all the arrangements so well.

Tailenders' Programme for 3rd Quarter of 2015

Tuesday 14 July

Abington

11.00 am – 12 noon, The Church of SS Peter and Paul
6 bells, 10-1-24 cwt in A (ground floor)

Lunch at The Trumpet, Weston Favell

Ecton

2.15 pm – 3.15 pm, The Church of St Mary Magdalene
6 bells, 15-2-20 cwt in E

Arranged by Dorothy Kirby
Ringing Master: Derek Hammond

Tuesday 11 August

Renhold

11.00 am – 12 noon, The Church of All Saints
6 bells, 13-0-0 in F#

Lunch at The Toby Carvery, Goldington Road, Bedford

Arranged by Felicity Evans
Ringing Master: Martin Barratt

Tuesday 8 September

North Crawley

10.45 am – 11.45 am, The Church of St Firmin
6 bells, 12-1-5 in F# (ground floor)

Lunch at The Prince of Wales, Bromham

Arranged by Richard Entwistle
Ringing Master: Richard Entwistle

If you have previously indicated that you will attend a monthly meeting and find that you are unable to do so, please let the organiser know.

From the Editor

If in any article the only contact details are a website or email address, and you do not have internet access, then in case of difficulty making contact please ask the Editor to make an initial contact on your behalf.

Views expressed in an article are those of its author. Articles may be edited.

Thanks go to the 'regular' contributors, as well as to Richard Hillson for the obituary of Ralph West, to Martin Goodwin for the District outing report and photos, and to Bob Jones for the minutes of the QDM and notes on the Association AGM that I did not attend.

The next Headstock will be distributed at the Quarterly District Meeting taking place on 3 October at Bromham.

Please send your articles, announcements etc by 28 September 2015. Your input is what makes Headstock what it is.

Maureen Hall
Email: maureensgpost@gmail.com

Headstock

Headstock is issued quarterly and is available to all towers in the Bedford District at a cost of £1 per calendar year as a contribution towards printing costs, payable in January each year. The money is not being collected at present but contributions may be given to the District Bell Restoration Fund. Headstock is also available on the website of the Bedfordshire Association of Church Bell Ringers www.bacr.co.uk but the web version has all personal contact details as well as surnames of young ringers removed. If your tower does not currently receive Headstock then please contact the Editor at the address above.

