

Southern News - The Southern District Newsletter

March 2021



Message from the Secretary, Richard Neal

In my role as Secretary it seems that more has taken place since the last edition of Southern News than took place the whole of last year. The frustrating thing is that these events were all meetings via Zoom.

The Annual District meeting took place on 20th February 2021. In the lead up to the meeting I publicised the event by email and learnt how to put things on the Association website calendar. The Zoom meeting chaired by Rob Lane was attended by about 20 Southern District members. The meeting recorded a year in which the pandemic curtailed most of the activity of the Southern District.

I attended the March General Committee meeting 6th March 2021. This meeting is required by the rules of the Association and concentrated on preparations for the AGM on 8th May 2021. Discussions concerned the various officer reports and the election of Officers amongst other things. The other big area of discussion was membership and the payment of the annual subscription. I have the opinion that despite some difficulties at about 35 towers the whole subs process seemed to be going better than I would have expected, given the lack of meeting each other in person.

I arranged a District Committee meeting, the first for some time. At the meeting it was decided to hold a District Zoom meeting for a get-together & chat with ringing using Ringing Room available for those who like that activity. This to take place, 10-11.30am Saturday 17th April 2021. In August it is hoped that pandemic rules will have been relaxed enough for a general ringing event at a tower. My fear is the Association insurance requirement to carry out a Risk Assessment before we ring in an actual tower. These events will be placed on the Association website calendar in due course.

Let's hope we can ring some actual church bells in May.



Welcome to our new members elected at the ADM:

Rachel Bridgeman from Aldrington

Royston Haines from Keymer

Paul and Yvonne Raab living in Germany and linked to Ringmer

Paul and Yvonne have been coming to Ringmer once a year for the last five years, staying a few days with Anne and Jonathan Franklin and experiencing a week's intensive ringing practice.

Paul has rung a couple of quarter peals covering behind, his first being on the Bell Meadow Mini Ring. Sadly no visit was possible in 2020 but both Paul and Yvonne have made amazing progress with their method ringing through the use of Ringing Room. We have seen them most weeks at different practices including the Association practices on a Saturday afternoon. Will they be able to put it all into practice on tower bells this year? We shall just have to wait and see!



Dates For Your Diary

Saturday 17th April 10am to 11.30am

Coffee, Cake, Catch up and a chance to have a go in Ringing Room, all from the comfort of your sofa!

Contact Richard Neal on sec-south@scacr.org to get the link. Everyone welcome—look forward to seeing you!



IF.....IF.....IF....

Everything goes to plan.....

Saturday 21st August 3pm to 4.30pm

Ringing and Picnic.... possibly at Buxted???

Watch this space!



The bells at Rodmell (south of Lewes) have been refurbished and will be hung for full circle ringing. This report was in the Sussex Express recently. We look forward to hearing more about this exciting project.



Young Ringers - get a pair of e-bells for £25

Are you under-25?

Do you like ringing handbells, or would you like to give it a go?

SCACR is offering young ringers a grant of £65 to buy a pair

of [electronic handbells](#) for just £25 (usually £90).

Contact Hamish McNaughton for details: secretary@scacr.org.

More info about e-bells here:



Guess Who?

This Southern District ringer was spotted recently enjoying a picnic lunch...

Who is it?

Where does he ring?

Where was he picnicking?



Guess Where?

This tower in the Southern District was captured last spring at the beginning of Lockdown...

Where is it?

How many bells does it have?



New Committee Member—Penny Neal introduces herself...

As a new member of the committee I thought I should introduce myself to those who don't know me.

I was taught to ring by Jim Beckingham at Ripe in 1982. I met Richard Neal there and we enjoyed progressing our ringing by visiting Chiddingly and other local towers.

I trained to be a physio at Kings College Hospital in London where I rang at Camberwell with Stella Shell. We often went on tower grabs organised by her. After qualifying in 1986 I married Richard and moved to Lewes where I have rung at Southover ever since. I have two children - Tom who rings at Brighton and Lorna who rings at Billingshurst.

I have joined the Committee to support the Association particularly as we start the ringing recovery.



An Article From Nick Cullen...

As we look forward to a return to ringing, what do we need to do to prepare ?

As the government lockdown rules are relaxed, the Central Council publish new guidance on their Website, <https://cccbr.org.uk/coronavirus/> to explain how the rules affect Bell ringing. Follow the CCCBR guidance to stay safe, and to gain agreement of Local Churches allowing ringing to restart.

One recommendation is that the Tower and Bells should be inspected and checked before ringing resumes. Many bells will have remained unvisited and unringed for over a year, and a lot could have happened in that time.

While there are restrictions on meeting others inside, any inspections will probably be mostly solitary, and must follow a strict Lone Worker protocol. Be sure to have a mobile phone on your person, and tell someone what you are doing, where and when you will be back. While you are inspecting the bells, another household could be clearing out the ringing chamber, and improving ventilation (see CCBR guidance on reducing risk of transmission between ringers).

Lone working is only safe if you are familiar with the Tower and the Bells and have worked among them before, otherwise seek help. Contact me, or another SCACR representative, and we can help with inspections and maintenance.

Without ringing, the normal wear and tear on Bells has reduced, but while they have been still, there could be weather damage, leaks, entry by birds, bats or insects. The bells themselves will probably still swing freely, but corrosion may have accumulated, pulleys and other moving parts may have seized up, and there will be a general accumulation of dust and dirt. Hopefully none of the bells were left up through lockdown, to risk filling with rain water.

In addition to Coronavirus guidance, the CCCBR also publish guidance on Bell maintenance, and a checklist for regular inspections, which I've used as a basis for this note. Go equipped for inspection, a boiler suit is good to protect from dirt, and a hand held LED worklight or head torch is useful for looking inside and under Bells.

Check the general condition of the tower, and particularly the rope path from the Ringing chamber to the bells. Watch out for signs that anyone else has gained access over the past year, and might have left equipment, tools or junk in the tower so as to interfere with the ropes. Clear any accumulated debris that might rain down on the ringers below. Check for signs of weather damage or leaks that have damaged or weakened the structure.

While checking the rope path is clear, check floors and ceilings and anywhere else the rope is restricted. Check that any pulleys rotate freely. Check for signs of deterioration or vermin attack that might have weakened the ropes.

In amongst the bells observe the usual safety precautions (starting with no bells left up !). Then check that the mesh or netting that closes the louvres and other openings is complete, and that there are no unwelcome visitors in amongst the Bells. Remember that Nesting Birds, and Bat Roosts are heavily protected and must not be disturbed. Be cautious of dirt and accumulated droppings if animals or birds have gained entry. Ensure that louvres, baffles and any other sound control is undamaged, church neighbours will be in for a surprise when ringing restarts, and we do not want a flood of complaints because the bells actually are 'louder than ever before.'

In normal times, the bolts for Bells, Clappers, Gudgeons, Wheels and Stays are subject to regular checking and tightening to detect and correct loosening due to the wear and tear of ringing. As there has been hardly any ringing, then the main reason that bolts may be loose is the weathering, drying and shrinking of wooden components. There could also be some warping over a year of little use, leading to misalignment of wheels or binding of stays for instance.

On the Bells, check that things that **should** move, **move freely**, and that everything else is robustly **fixed** in place and does **not move**. Check that the Bells swing easily when rocked gently. Check that the wheels do not wobble, are not warped, and remain aligned to the Ground pulleys. Check that the stays are present, and straight and tightly attached to the headstock.

Tightening bolts requires the right tools for the job, large spanners of exactly the right size. Older bells have nuts and bolts of several different systems, all sized in inches, and damage and injury can be caused using the 'wrong spanner' such as the nearest metric approximation to an Imperial sized Nut or Bolt head. Do not attempt work without the correct size of tool.

Underneath the Bells check that the Ground pulleys rotate freely, the slider moves without sticking, and the clapper swings easily, and in line with the swing of the bell. Side to side movement indicates a worn clapper bush, and misalignment or rotation within the Bell indicates that the Clapper bolt is not tight. These are wear conditions unlikely to have worsened during Lockdown.

Finally check for Clock hammers, Ellacombe Chime hammers, or anything else that might impact the Bell, Clapper, Wheel or Headstock as the Bell swings full circle. During lockdown, many churches have found alternative ways to sound their Bells, and so we need to pay particular attention that the hammers are moved away from the Bells, and (held) back against the stop that keeps them safe, and allows the Bells to be swung.

If you have an Ellacombe Chime, or a Church Clock that chimes on the ringing bells, then you probably need to return to the Ringing chamber to disconnect the Ellacombe chiming ropes, put them out of the way so they cannot be used, and update the Notice to Ringers to disconnect them before ringing. You should also disengage the Clock chimes ready for ringing, and return to the Belfry to double check that the disconnected hammers are all out of danger and safely away for the bells.

As stated earlier, in case of uncertainty, please ask for help and we will be delighted to render any assistance towards the resumption of Church Bell ringing throughout Sussex.

Nick Cullen, Bell Restoration Representative, SCACR Southern District.



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