

HANDBELL RINGERS
OF GREAT BRITAIN



South East Region

Newsletter

February 2021
Issue 119



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Larry & Carla Sue

EDITORS NOTES



Welcome to the latest edition of the South East Region Newsletter, in which you will find:- an obituary for Alan Collings, a report from Headcorn HR. and some gardening hints for February!

Many thanks to those who sent me these items, and of course it is understandable that we haven't had any more.

However, as you can see from the Headcorn piece, your contributions do not have to be bell related - just tell us how you are getting through this latest lockdown - maybe a new recipe, or a poem. The gardening hints may also come in useful if you are able to get into the garden! It is so nice to keep in contact with everyone through the newsletter.

With the vaccine now well in circulation, (it doesn't hurt!) let's hope we can get together again later in the year.

The deadline for the next Newsletter is **31st March 2021**

Best wishes to all - stay safe

Valerie v.j.boon@ntlworld.com

Honoured Members of the South East Region

Cliff Blundell

Keith Rowland

Angela Blundell

Wendy Rowland

Pauline Dover

Michael Wilkinson

Bridget Smith

Derek Wilkinson

Jeanne Turner

Oops, we're sorry.....

Unfortunately the gremlins crept in and 'Mary Hews' name was incorrectly spelt as 'Hughes' in the last edition. She would have rapped our knuckles very firmly and we're sorry for the mistake.

Dear Ringers,

Well, here we are in yet another lockdown! I think this one has been tougher because of the shorter winter days, but at least there are some signs of spring in the garden (although, I'm not going to mention the weather forecast for the next few days!). I am going to be trying to follow some of John's gardening tips over half term.

I'm sad to report another death in our regional bell ringing family - Janet Elliot of Wandle Ringers and Addington Bells. A full obituary will appear in the next newsletter.

On a more positive note, your regional committee are beginning to think about plans for restarting ringing in the region. Although nothing concrete can be put in place yet, we are having a zoom meeting later this month, so if your team would be interested in hosting something once we are able to, please do let myself or Sandra know (see 'Back to Bells' in place of the diary of events).

Until we can ring together again - stay safe.

Yours, *Helen*

HELENLSECKER@GMAIL.COM

ALAN JAMES COLLINGS 1940 - 2020



Alan was born on February 3rd, 1940 at Plymouth and learned to ring at St. Andrew's Minster as a teenager. He attended Birmingham University graduating in applied chemistry and was awarded a PhD for his work on the effects of particulates on the lungs, ultimately becoming known for his work in the field of toxicology.

In 1962 he married his childhood sweetheart, Mary Congdon at St. Andrew's Plymouth. They went on to have three daughters, Elizabeth, Alison, and Helen, all of whom were introduced to tower bell ringing at an early age.

In his 20's Alan was given a set of twelve bells that he used to encourage other ringers to play simple carols and tunes around the streets to raise funds for the Church of England Children's society, sharing mince pies made by Mary.

When living in Edinburgh he even managed to get his work colleagues to perform at the Assembly rooms dressed as angels, complete with coat hanger halos (surely a tribute to his leadership skills).

As his daughters grew up, they became part of his Christmas ringing group. When Alan and Mary moved to Surrey in 1977, he started another handbell group from the Chobham tower ringers, and the St Lawrence Chobham Handbell Ringers was formed. Alan took his little team to his first handbell rally at Tolworth in 1985, ringing around the box of twelve bells sharing a single copy of basic numbered music. For Alan it was amazing to see bells being rung from draped tables using individual music copies and staff notation. The concept of correct damping was a revelation and from that day, the St. Lawrence Chobham HR rapidly progressed.

Following his appearance at Tolworth, Alan rapidly burst upon the regional handbell scene. Offering a venue for a rally and enthusiastically supporting the region. Alan's organising flair and his leadership skills immediately became apparent, and within a few years he became chairman of the South East Region, highlighting his remarkable ability to lead in his own gentle and genial manner with his planning and problem-solving abilities. Under his leadership the South

East Region blossomed. It was Alan that found Guildford Cathedral as the venue for the region's annual festival, where it has remained for many years.

His old set of twelve bells needed attention and was restored by a friend. Having seen larger teams at rallies, he set about getting a five-octave set for his team, ultimately building his ringers into a group of some renown, taking part in international symposiums and touring in the Caribbean, Canada, USA. on BBC television, and performing at many high-profile concerts to critical acclaim.

On retirement to Sussex Alan formed the Senlac Handbell Ringers, quickly achieving a creditably high standard of performance. He had been encouraged to try Handbell Restoration, and after retiring to Sussex he developed this skill into a successful small business, 'Handbell Solutions'. Another retirement adventure was the development of his own mini ring, 'Dewbys Bells' to a unique and readily portable design, fulfilling a long-held ambition. Hundreds of quarter peals were rung. on these bells, consistently becoming among the leading quarter peal towers. and ringers could expect a cup of tea and a slice of Mary's wonderful cake. Throughout all his many projects and activities, he was aided in so many ways by Mary, she was a constant support, providing a warm welcome and great hospitality in her own quiet, kind and often almost invisible way

Alan and Mary, (the double act) will be sadly missed from both Handbell and Tower-bell ringing. We will all miss Alan, the gentle, kind, generous to a fault and unassuming leader who, with Mary, has done so much to further our enjoyment of all ringing.

He died on 26th November following health complications initiated by a fall that broke his femur.

George Francis. Elizabeth Cook.

YULETIDE BELLS TO BOUNTY FOR BIRDS

Mid December, and the team of Handbell Ringers from Headcorn were turning their thoughts and multiple talents to a very special Christmas tree. The gift of a banquet to the birds, squirrels and all passing mice who sheltered in the Churchyard of St. Peter and St. Paul's.

The bi-annual Christmas Tree Festival was to be held outside for the first time. The socially distanced trees glimmering and lighting the long star-dark path from road to ancient stone porch.

We used such a bounty of natural foods to make the decorations- with a seasoning of lots of fun and ingenuity! Ideas, experiments, photos and plans were shared online, keeping us together as the days shortened and anticipation grew.



Then, long chains of popcorn, dried apple and cheerios, strings of twisted peanuts in their shells, replaced tinsel - some threaded with jewel bright cranberries, glaze cherries and grapes. Boxes and bags stood waiting on the wet grass.



Masked like strange characters from a winter carnival we hung our stars and bells, egg shells and tiny pots of seed, and suet.

There were pinecones dipped in melted fat and dotted with ripe sunflower kernels.



Orange peel cups, each a chalice for a fat-ball, bedecked the tree. Bunches of berries, scarlet crab-apples and pretty hoops of corn with blueberries dangled temptingly. Ah yes, it was beautiful!

We miss our 'ringing of bells', especially at Christmas time, but what pleasure we had that morning! Sharing each others company again to provide a nourishing feast for wildlife.

And oh! the smiles when informed that one of our prettiest hoops was last seen making its exit along the path in the chilly paws of a Headcorn squirrel!

Viv Sinden

KEEPING IN TOUCH DURING THE PANDEMIC

It is good to keep in touch with others who share our interests during this socially distant period even while waiting for improvement with the vaccines. HRGB has a number of ways of keeping in touch with ringing and ringers.

The national HRGB Facebook page has all sorts of items including ones you can connect with - humorous items, videos of handbell ringing and handbell ringers from the UK and worldwide, bell-themed pictures in the style of well-known artists, thoughtful contributions etc. From there you can find links to various British and overseas ringers and enjoy their videos, insights and humour.

The HRGB national web site (handbell.org.uk) now has pages for members with quite a lot of useful information. This includes, for example, the Virtual Ringing section where you can book on the upcoming virtual meeting on Feb 13th where you can have fun learning some ways of rehearsing and having fun with handbell friends online - no need to have bells available. There are a couple of spaces for ringers still available. For those that miss this session the notes are available on the website. Keep an eye on this section as it is hoped to add more ideas in the coming months.

The national HRGB Twitter is also great to keep in touch with all the changes, announcements etc going on in HRGB. HRGB can also be found on Pinterest, Instagram and YouTube.

One upcoming event is the national AGM. This time it will be virtual so all members are welcome to attend without need to drive the length of the havecountry. Come to the meeting and hear what the HRGB Chairman and Secretary have to say about what is happening and you can ask questions or make points about what is going on.

Don't forget our recently revamped regional website, www.hrgbse.org.uk, as well as the regional Facebook page and Twitter.

Alan and Gay Cooper

CHUCKLE CORNER

Law of the Bath - When the body is fully immersed in water, the phone rings.

Law of the Result - When you try to prove to someone that a machine won't work, it will.

Law of Biomechanics - The severity of the itch is inversely proportional to the reach.

Brown's Law of Physical Appearance - If the clothes fit, they're ugly.

Oliver's Law of Public Speaking - A closed mouth gathers no feet.

THINGS TO DO IN THE GARDEN IN FEBRUARY

Top dress the flower beds and borders as soon as the soil is workable with a balanced fertiliser such as Growmore or Blood Fish and Bone.

Dahlia tubers should be started into growth to produce cuttings which can be propagated to provide new plants for the coming Summer, if the tubers are shrivelled they should be plunged into tepid water overnight.

Plant Lily bulbs in pots and containers ready for Summer.

Continue to pot on Sweet Peas sown in the Autumn, it is not too late to sow seed this month.

Slow growing Annuals such as Antirrhinum and Lobelia should be sown under cover.

Roses should be pruned this month or next. Hybrid Tea Roses produce flowers on new wood so that the harder they are pruned the better, Floribunda Roses also flower on new wood but only need to be lightly trimmed reducing the stems to 12" above ground level, aim to cut to an outward facing bud, Rambling Roses which only flower once should be pruned after flowering in September. Complete the planting of deciduous hedges, shrubs and trees.

Prune Mahonias after flowering.

Cut back Summer and Autumn flowering Clematis to the lowest pair of strong buds.

Winter flowering Heathers should be trimmed as their flowers fade to keep the plants bushy.

Prune Summer flowering deciduous shrubs such as Buddleia and Lavatera which flower on the current years growth.

Over wintered Geraniums and Fuchsias should be started into growth with gradual watering

In the middle of the month you can give your indoor Tomatoes and Cucumbers an early start by sowing the seed indoors.

Broad Beans, Beetroot and Peas can be sown in prepared soil under cloches.

Early Potatoes should be chitted in a light, cool, frost free place.

John Boon

HRGB SOUTH EAST REGION DIARY 2021

Back to Bells

As we start thinking about coming out of tiers, lockdowns and winter hibernation – here are some post vaccination ringing things to think about and look forward to, depending on Covid restrictions:

- Team rehearsals and SERBO getting going.
- Regional events starting up again – if your team would like to host a little something, please contact Sandra on 020 8657 1344 or email sandra@hrgb.org.uk
- The next Festival Service at Guildford Cathedral will be in June 2022.
- There are no national ‘in person’ events this year. The national AGM will be a ‘virtual’ event on 10th April. The next SE AGM, hopefully not virtual, will be held later in the year.
- The next National Rally will be in April 2022, 8th-10th, in Sheffield.
- UK Bronze will be in 2022.
- The International Symposium (in Nashville, Tennessee) will be in July 2022
- The next Residential Ringing Week will be in 2023.

***Would YOU like to host an event in the future,
when restrictions are lifted?
A regional rally, a mini or micro ring, a County get-together?
Please contact the Secretary, a committee member
or a County Rep to talk about it..... please let us know!***

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