

HANDBELL RINGERS  
OF GREAT BRITAIN



# *South East Region*

# *Newsletter*

*July 2020*  
*Issue 116*



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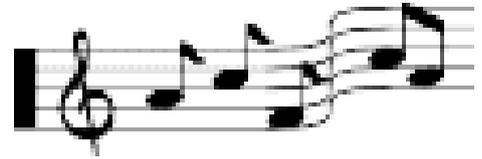
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Larry & Carla Sue

## EDITORS NOTES



Welcome to the latest edition of the South East Region Newsletter - an even shorter one! In which you will find:-

From the Diary of a Handbell Ringer, further information from Cliff Blundell about Angela, his money raising challenge, and a few 'Lockdown' pieces from various sources!

A flyer for the Sway Rally in October

The deadline for the next Newsletter is **12th September 2020**

Things are getting easier now, so if anyone has done, or is planning to do anything with your team, please let me know - however short!!

Many thanks in anticipation. Keep well,

*Valerie*      v.j.boon@ntlworld.com

### **Honoured Members of the South East Region**

<i>Cliff Blundell</i>	<i>Keith Rowland</i>
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Dear Ringers,

Looking at the weather we have had over the past couple of weeks, it seems hard to believe we are already in July, but schools are breaking up for the summer holidays, so we must be! I hope some of you are able to enjoy the lifting of some restrictions and getting out a bit more (although I appreciate for some who are still shielding, this is still a few weeks away). Many will have appreciated a visit to the hairdresser or barber, maybe a socially distanced visit to a friend or relative or even ventured to a restaurant or bar. I must confess that I have no desire for the latter, although we did have a music department picnic last week - the first time we have all seen each other (other than in online meetings) since the middle of March!

It is clear from the articles we have received that people are generally keeping busy - learning new skills and fundraising seem to be the main things I have heard lots about! Kate Hanks and Cliff Blundell have been brave enough to write about their endeavours. If you have anything which you would like to share with the rest of the region, please do let Valerie know. It can be as simple as a photo with a couple of sentences, or a poem, or a picture or anything that can be printed - and it doesn't even have to be handbell related!

Some of you may have seen the information from the last HRGB NEC meeting posted on social media or on the HRGB website with regard to National Events. Any of you already signed up for either UK Bronze or this year's National Rally should have received an email from the organisers of the event, but for everyone else

***“The NEC decided that **national events - the National Rally, UK Bronze, NRRW and the Musical Directors' Weekend Seminar - should all be put back by two years.** So, the next national event to take place will be the national rally in 2022.”***

For regional events, we will continue to follow the government guidelines and also any guidelines published by venues. The Headcorn rally in October has now been postponed, possibly until the Spring, The Sway rally, also in October, is currently under review, but please do let Kate know if you would be interested in attending. Expressing an interest at this point does mean that you will already

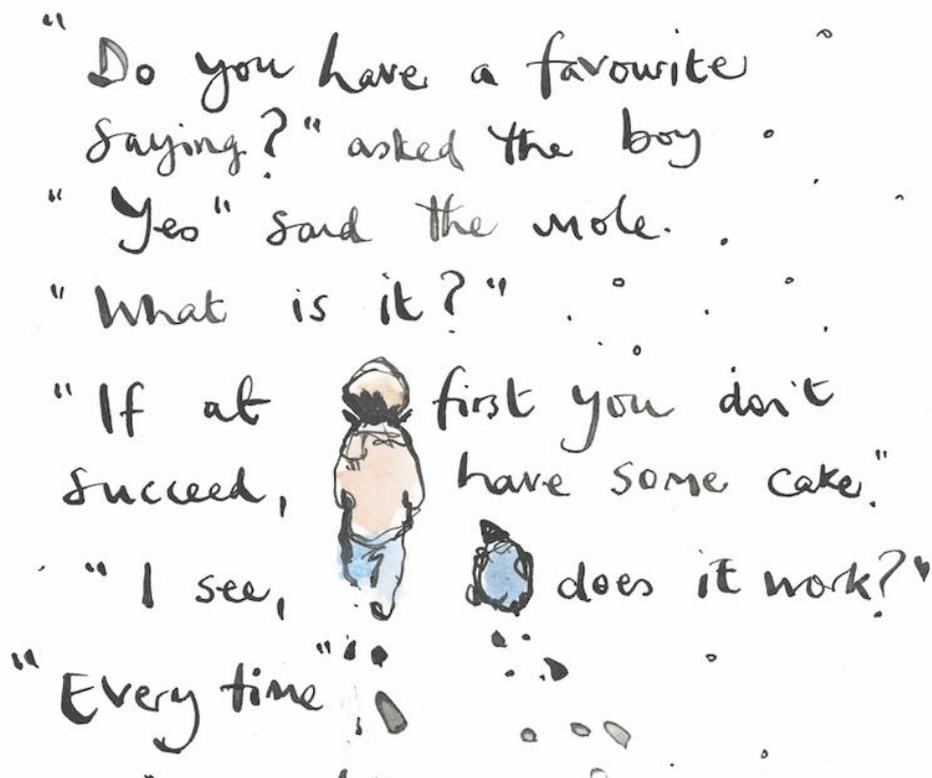
be on the list for a postponed event and the organiser may well contact you before the new date and form are sent out in the newsletter. You will see from the diary that the SERBO audition day has also been postponed.

So with nothing happening nationally or regionally, some of you will be wondering about when your team can get back to ringing! At the NEC meeting, a small group was set up who will draw up some guidelines for teams about rehearsals and performances. While we wait for this, I do know that some teams have had socially distanced outdoor rehearsals. There is also some guidance on the Malmark website which is helpful for those teams using Malmark bells. As soon as the HRGB guidance is available, it will be posted on all websites and social media pages. In the meantime, please ensure you are following the government guidelines. I think my over-riding thought is that if you have to question whether it is safe, it is probably best not to do it yet!

Until we can meet together again, keep in touch with each other and stay safe.

Yours, *Heben* [HELENLSECKER@GMAIL.COM](mailto:HELENLSECKER@GMAIL.COM)

[And in the meantime, here is one of my favourite quotes from The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse by Charles Mackesy]



## **Lockdown and Beyond!**

If I had to sum up the past few months in one word, it would be ‘CUCKOO’! This has nothing to do with my state of mind or the land I seem to inhabit (according to my dear husband). No, it is the actual bird! I have lived in the New Forest for 23 years and I have not noticed the call of a cuckoo at all during this time until LOCKDOWN!! We started to have early morning walks on the semi deserted saltmarshes around Lymington and I was delighted to hear my first cuckoo right at the beginning of this period. Since that first call, I have heard cuckoos everywhere – near the saltmarshes, deep in the Forest and even from trees next to my back garden. I haven’t actually seen one yet, but the call keeps echoing around wherever I go. Needless to say, it prompted me to look out my CD of ‘On Hearing the First Cuckoo of Spring’ and to suggest to my daughter that she name the new male gosling on her farm ‘Delius’.

Like everyone else, the unexpected time at home resulted in my having a thorough tidy up, from my wardrobe to that drawer in the kitchen which houses everything from balloons to screwdrivers. First on the list of ‘sorting out’ however, were my personal files of bell music. The idea has always been to place the music copies in alphabetical order of title for easy access. A simple and obvious idea, but one which necessitates an orderly mind to start with. I discovered that I had odd copies of music in this or that file, on the floor next to the piano, in the rehearsal bag, next to the bed..... the places where I found music seemed endless. Having gathered everything together, the next task was to decide how to file them. I was taught in school that you disregard ‘The’, ‘A’ or ‘An’ when placing titles in alphabetical order. Easy! However, I was thrown into a dilemma when faced with something like ‘Reflections on Kingsfold’. Should it go under ‘R’ or would it be better under ‘K’ because I always remember ‘Kingsfold’ but not the full title? You see my problem? In this case, I came down on ‘K’, but this was just one such decision – there were several others. It made me appreciate much more the work done by the Sway team’s librarian, Helen Corke, who tragically died early this year from cancer. Dear Helen was a loyal and gifted member of the team who organised our music extremely well and never seemed to mind if I rang her up to ask for a set of copies ready for rehearsal that same day! We are most fortunate indeed that Elaine Brett has taken over this responsibility and has rearranged one of her bedrooms to accommodate the mountain of music the team seems to own! Fortunately, Elaine is an organised person so will not have the sort of problems which seem to beset me! Thank you so much Elaine.

Like all of you, I am missing ringing greatly. Not just the music itself but the camaraderie of friends of like mind. My SERBO file remains intact, the Sway team's current programme of 'Sounds of Praise' is still in the folder but my Belleplates are out on the bed in a very strange layout as I wrestle with trying to play 'Together' by Debbie Wiseman as a solo. The nearest it has come to performance is my effort of page 1 played for my grandsons in Jersey via FaceTime. They were very complimentary but the eldest, Finley, summed it up well by saying 'I can play a real tune on the piano nanny?'



The Sway team haven't managed a zoom time during the lockdown period but we have kept in touch by phone and e-mails. Elaine has marked Thursday evening rehearsal nights by sending us all uplifting and often hilarious videos and other team members have sent pictures and anecdotes for us all to enjoy. We particularly liked Maggie's link to College Church Hallelujah Chorus on YouTube. <https://youtu.be/Ag6CYY0cbFc>

I cannot deny that Lockdown has been a trial of patience but there have been some positive aspects – my tidy bell music for one! However, I am looking forward to resuming normal activities as soon as possible. With that in mind, the Sway team are hoping to celebrate their 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at the rally booked for October 3<sup>rd</sup> in Brockenhurst. The Sway team would welcome you to attend if we are permitted to hold the rally and look forward to ringing with enthusiasm on that occasion. Please make a note of that date in your diary and let us know if you are interested in joining us. In the meantime, I will endeavour to improve my Belleplate performance so that it sounds like a 'real' tune!!!

Thinking of you all.

*Kate Hanks* (Sway HR)

## ANGELA BLUNDELL 25/5/34-1/3/20



In 1951/2 Angela met a church youth worker (me) at St Barnabas church in Sutton and realised that bells would always have first call on my time. She decided that she would have to learn to ring tower bells before persuading me to propose marriage to her. Angela's decision had at least 2 significant consequences. The first was that she encouraged St Barnabas to purchase a set of handbells so that, instead

of a recording of St. Paul's Cathedral bells coming out of a small turret, real bells could be rung over the sound system each Sunday.

The second consequence was that, in 1965, she supported me as we re-started the Burnham Handbell Society (BHS), originally formed in the late 1800s.

The first meeting of the revived BHS was on a hot summer's day in 1965 when our twin daughters, Ruth and Lynn, then 5 years old, and 3 or 4 of their friends met in our front room to ring Good King Wenceslas, on 12 bells, one of a number of arrangements by Bill Birmingham. Angela ran this meeting, as I was in hospital for a minor op at the time.

Bill was primarily a tower bell ringer so he used numbers for the bells; 1 at the top, 12 at the bottom with 5 as the key note or doh. I still use this system for much of our music as it is easy to write out and easy for novices who want to 'have a go'. Angela and I gave, literally, hundreds of people the opportunity to make music, with a minimum of instruction, including at least two Chief Scouts, many Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Brownies and Guides plus assorted television personalities and innumerable school groups.

For many years Angela welcomed the original group of youngsters into our front room for weekly practices, only stopping when they were just too big to squeeze in. At that point the practice moved to the church. While I led these weekly practices, Angela ran many school and Guide groups, including the Monday Monsters, one of whom, many years later, admitted that he had indeed been a monster. Some of the original group are still in touch and remember, with pleasure, the welcome Angela gave them when they arrived for the after-school sessions. Biscuits and squash were always available.

Angela didn't restrict her involvement to teaching, encouraging and welcoming all-comers to her home and the church. In 'spare' time, around 4 children and a bell obsessed husband, she used her considerable skills as a needlewoman to make table cloths embroidered with the notes of the bells, soft bags for each bell, again with the note name on, and uniforms for the various bands. Another skill,

seriously practised, was making marmalade and other preserves to raise money to extend the set to 5 octaves. Angela's diary shows that she made over a ton a year (2240 pounds in old money!) for several years.

As our family grew up and moved away we enjoyed trips to Dunblane, both the Ring in Praise seminars and the Ringing Weeks (later at Kingston), along with SERBO and UK Bronze, where we enjoyed ringing exciting music and meeting many friends from all over the country. Sadly, trips to Scotland and to UK Bronze had to be abandoned after Angela suffered a stroke in 2011 taking out her left side (she was born left handed!). The loss of her left hand didn't stop her ringing; we continued to ring 6 bell music together. Angela made her final public performance in January this year at a celebration of my 90th birthday. Such is a life of handbell ringing. Angela is now at rest; may she rise in glory.

*Cliff Blundell*

## **2.6 Challenge**

What were your thoughts when it was announced, in March, that no gatherings outside the home would be permitted? Mine are not worth repeating but I did decide to learn to ring six bells on my own. Angela and I having rung four in hand for many years, and having rung 6 bell music together since Angela's stroke in 2011, I wasn't going to let Angela's death and the lockdown deprive me of my hobby. Googling "6 bells in hand" brought me to a seminar by Nancy Kirkner which gave all the necessary information.

Having discovered how to do it, and having a suitable set of bells of my own, I wondered what use I might make of my new skill. Lockdown again came to my aid. Because the London Marathon had been postponed from 26<sup>th</sup> April VirginMoney had challenged people to raise money for the charities which might otherwise have been left short of funds. The challenge was to use the 26 (miles of the marathon) as a target. I decided to ring 26 whole pulls of set changes each day during the month of May. This would go some way towards my doing some change ringing, which I have been doing for 70 years, as well as some handbell ringing, albeit on my own, unusually.

There was not much difficulty in deciding to ask for donations to Parkinson'sUK, partly because I had previously been chairman of our local Branch and also because, when thinking what charity to collect for, our current chairman, a good

friend and one time tower bell ringer as well as mother of one of our earlier handbell ringers, sent me the local newsletter, as usual.

Ringling 26 whole pulls (in tower bell ringing terms, a hand stroke followed by a back stroke) of set changes (Rounds 1.2.3.4.5.6; Queens 1.3.5.2.4.6. and Tittums 1.4.2.5.3.6) each day was no great problem as it encouraged me to put some time aside to practise some of our 6 bell tunes. This, in itself, has made the whole project worthwhile because I have been able to provide bells before the streamed Sunday morning services (in the Vicar's garden) and to play a short piece after Janet has received communion..

The main aim of the challenge, to raise money for Parkinson'sUK, has also been successful in that people contributed more than £2,000 to the fund. Many of these donations came from friends and family, some in Australia or the USA, but others from people whom I did not know previously. It was thrilling to read, most days during the month, that another donation had been made. Thank you to everyone who supported my effort. I continue to practise daily even though my little fingers are complaining that they are being asked to do the impossible.

*Cliff Blundell*

### **The Queue**

While waiting in a socially distanced queue early one morning for the supermarket to open for us 'seniors', I was surprised to see a young man saunter along and try to cut in at the front of the queue. A furious old lady waved her cane at him, and he quickly backed away.

A moment later, the young man tried again. He managed to dodge the old lady, but then two old men started shouting at him. Again, the young man backed away.

But he wasn't giving up, and soon the young man approached the queue for the third time. By now, all of us pensioners were ready for him, an angry wall of opposition.

The young man stood there for a moment, and then shrugged his shoulders. "If you people won't let me unlock the door, none of you will ever get in to shop."

*Ed: I found the following poem whilst sorting out our Parish Magazine!*

## **THE LOCKDOWN LIFTS** *By Nigel Beeton*

There's life in the town!  
No longer 'locked down'!  
The people stroll out in the sun  
The majestic trees  
Sway in the light breeze  
Like they wanted to join in the fun!

Like light after dark!  
We can walk in the park!  
Buy our tea, and sit out on the grass!  
We can chat to our friends  
As our loneliness ends  
And we smile at the strangers we pass!

Yes there are still queues  
Which cease to amuse  
But things are no longer so black!  
As they sing in that song –  
You miss what is gone,  
But it's great when at last it comes back!

### **WHAT'S HAPPENING DURING LOCKDOWN**

In Japan in the last seven days.....  
The Origami Bank has folded.  
Sumo Bank has gone belly up.  
Bonsai Bank has announced plans to cut some of its branches.  
Karaoke Bank is up for sale and going for a song.  
Shares in Kamikaze Bank have nose-dived.  
500 staff at Karate Bank have got the chop.  
There are reports of something fishy at Sushi Bank where staff fear getting a raw deal.

Germany is now advising people to stock up on sausages and cheese - this is called the wurst käse scenario.

## HRGB SOUTH EAST REGION DIARY 2020

3 OCTOBER Rally - Sway TBC

10 OCTOBER East Kent Rally - Headcorn - postponed

21-24 OCTOBER UK BRONZE - Sutton - postponed

NOVEMBER SERBO audition & 1<sup>st</sup> rehearsal - postponed

***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!***

***The following are actual call centre conversations....***

Customer: "I've been ringing you on 0700 2300 for two days. Why didn't you answer?"

Travel agent: "Where did you get that number from, sir?"

Customer: "It's there on the door to your Travel Centre."

Operator: "Sir, they are our opening hours."

Then there was the caller who asked for a knitwear company in Woven.

Operator: "Woven? Are you sure?"

Caller: "Yes, of course. That's what it says on the label; Woven in Scotland."

## SE REGION COMMITTEE AND JOB HOLDERS 2019/20

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