

HANDBELL RINGERS
OF GREAT BRITAIN



South East Region

Newsletter

July 2025
Issue 138



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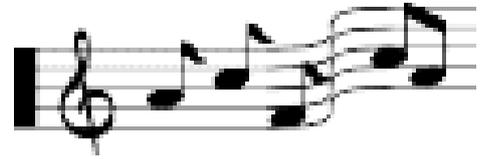
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Larry & Carla Sue

EDITORS NOTES



Welcome to the latest edition of the South East Region Newsletter.

We have 2 reports from Sway HR - this I think must be some sort of record! Also accounts of a Concert by Barfield and 'A bit of a challenge' Rally. Then there is the annual invitation for Christmas Together.

Unfortunately, we couldn't receive emails for nearly 3 weeks from the middle of June to the 6th July due to problems with Virgin Media. After two visits our friendly computer man managed to get it put right, but any email sent to us during that period cannot be found, either by our chap or Virgin Media!!

If any of you sent something for this edition and it is not printed, I can only apologise, and ask you to send it again for the next edition

The deadline for the next Newsletter is **11th October, 2025.**

Best wishes to all, and Happy Ringing!

Valerie v.j.boon@ntlworld.com

Honoured Members of the South East Region

Cliff Blundell

Angela Blundell (dec'd)

Pauline Dover (dec'd)

Bridget Smith (dec'd)

Jeanne Turner (dec'd)

Keith Rowland

Wendy Rowland (dec'd)

Derek Wilkinson (dec'd)

Michael Wilkinson

Shirley Aston

Thank you to those that sent reports of events to both Valerie and myself. I hope this means that nothing has been missed while Valerie's emails were out of action! - Helen

Dear Ringers,

As I sit here watching the wildlife in my garden (and the black clouds gathering overhead!), I am grateful that it is not quite as hot as it was earlier this month. I am also grateful for those of you who attended our recent rallies and workshops. Although we, unfortunately, had to cancel the workshop about setting up a new youth team, this is a very rare occurrence in our region. We are very lucky to have an active membership in the South East Region who enjoy attending events - some willingly travelling long distances and even making a weekend of it!

You will see from the diary at end of the newsletter (we put it there, so it is easy to find!) that we have events planned across the region - from Downton (New Forest) to Headcorn, and Newbury to Sanderstead. You will also note that our Birthday Rally in January 2026 is again being held at Charter's School in Sunningdale and hosted by Winkfield St Mary's. We have been holding the rally here since we restarted events, and despite a few teams coming forward to saying that they were interested in hosting the event, no-one has found a venue or agreed to host this rally.

Back in the February newsletter, I gave a little history of the Birthday Rally. We are, I believe, the only region to run an event each year which is completely free for members to attend, and it would be a shame if we cannot find a different venue in order to host the event in 2027! I will repeat what I said in that newsletter - ***"As a team you can run the whole event, or just find the venue, or anything in between, and the committee will help with anything that is needed such as putting together the form, choosing music, finding conductors, doing the catering. We are happy to work with you to run a successful event, however large or small it is. If your team are always saying "there isn't anything near us", then maybe you could find somewhere?!"*** Please do think about this, otherwise you may find that we are unable to run the event in the future!

You will also see that we are looking at running some more workshops in 2026, possibly as a multi-workshop day. If you have any ideas for workshops or any other events, our next committee meeting is in September, and events for 2026 will be our main focus, so please do get in touch.

Included with this newsletter is the application form to join the South East Region Bell Orchestra for our next season. The audition day and first rehearsal in November is a two-way process - yes, it is for us to see whether you are a good fit for the team, but it is also a chance for you to have a go, so please don't feel worried about applying. If you are unsure, please do speak to one of us about it. I always say to my boys at school that you never know if you don't try!

Finally on events, a reminder that HRGB are hosting the next International Handbell Symposium in Aberdeen next August. Registration details will be out soon, and all the information is on the website <https://ihs26.handbells.org.uk/>. Yes, it isn't a cheap event, but it won't ever be any cheaper than within our own country - if you have never experienced a symposium, now is your chance!

As well as including photos and write-ups of events in the newsletter, I also try and make sure that photos (and the occasional video) appear on our Facebook page during or just after an event. I know that there are some teams in the region who have Facebook pages, and it would be lovely to be able to share your posts on our page. If you tag us (by typing @HRGBSE) in your post, we can then easily share it. We have also been asked to tag @HRGB so that everything regional can be shared at a National level as well.

If you are at National Residential Ringing Week, I will see you there - otherwise I hope to see you at one of our Autumn events.

Yours,

Helen

HELENLSECKER@GMAIL.COM

CONCERT AT ST LEONARD'S CHURCH, WOODCOTE

At our concert in Thatcham last October, we were approached by a member of the audience (Chris Bernard) about the possibility of performing a fund-raising concert in her church in the village of Woodcote in South Oxfordshire. She mentioned that St Leonard's is quite a small church so she wasn't sure if there would be sufficient room to accommodate our full team of 14 ringers plus conductor and 36 feet of tables. A date was arranged for our musical director Graham and me to meet Chris and some of her colleagues at the church to assess what might be possible.

The lovely St Leonard's Church is situated in a large, well-kept churchyard which has a garden of remembrance, a wildlife conservation area and a large number of graves including one for a soldier who perished in the First World War – now highlighted by the War Graves Commission with a blue plaque near the entrance gate.

It is indeed a small church and there was much measuring, floor pacing and head scratching as Graham tried to work out ways of configuring our set up to fit in all our tables and ringers. Eventually we had to concede defeat and that the only option possible was a performance by our small ensemble of six ringers plus conductor. Chris and her colleagues were happy to accept this option and the afternoon of Saturday 10 May was agreed as the concert date. While this proved a little unfortunate as it prevented some of us attending the SERBO concert, which originally had a provisional date of 3 May, it was perfect timing for the concert to be one of the village's events to mark the 80th anniversary of VE Day.

This was a new experience for us as the small ensemble had never performed a full concert before: its engagements are usually shorter performances – often with some audience participation - for groups such as WIs, U3As, friendship clubs, residents in care homes etc. However, we have a wide variety of 12 bell music in our repertoire – much of it familiar to our audiences - and we were able to put together a suitable programme. To add some variety, we decided to play a few pieces on hand chimes which worked well.

On the day itself, it was a lovely journey to Woodcote in perfect spring weather, crossing the River Thames at Pangbourne and travelling north through the Oxfordshire countryside. Chris and her team had worked hard on the preparations: there were flags and bunting in the church, two bell-related quizzes, a raffle, tea and coffee with delicious cakes in the interval (what's not to like!),

and the thoughtful provision of some liquid refreshments for the ringers in the break between our warm-up practice and the start of the concert.

The first half of our programme comprised some classical pieces such as Handel's March from the Occasional Overture, Purcell's Trumpet Tune and Elgar's Pomp and Circumstance. In the second half, our very appreciative audience joined in enthusiastically to sing along to some of the songs we played, especially Oh Mr Porter, Singin' in the Rain, and a First World War medley.

St Leonard's Church may be small, but there was nothing lacking in the warm and friendly welcome we received from everyone concerned – the church's minister, the organizing team, and the parishioners and visitors in the audience. It was a very happy and enjoyable afternoon and we were delighted to receive the following lovely comments a day or so after the concert:

“Everyone enjoyed a very special afternoon”

“There were lots of very complimentary comments, and it was good to welcome new faces into the church for such a lovely event”

“Bill (a senior citizen) particularly enjoyed the songs of the second half, which brought back lots of memories for him”

“It was evident from the conversations after church this morning that everyone enjoyed yesterday's concert. It was altogether a really lovely afternoon”



Dianne Rogers
Secretary – Barfield Handbell Ringers

BELL SUNDAY!

I have discovered very recently, that St Dunstan is the patron saint of bell ringers! A bit of research revealed to me that this was because St Dunstan experimented with the early forging of bells in the 900's. He also encouraged the use of bells in parish churches. His patronal day is the 19th of May and the closest Sunday to that date is known as 'Bell Sunday'. Well! - I never knew that, but the vicar of the church I attend – St Thomas' in Lymington – did!! He decided that we would go all out to celebrate Bell Sunday this year and knowing of my passion for handbell ringing asked me to participate.

He pointed me to the 12 handbells kept in a box on top of a cupboard in the vestry and asked if I could ask a few people to ring 'something' during the communion service on the 18th May. These lovely handbells are used on occasions by the tower ringers to illustrate changes and methods so I'm told. On handling them, I realized that they were set to ring in both directions so tune ringing would be a bit of a challenge because of the 'rebound'. However, I had 2 weeks to gather a few volunteers, teach them basic ringing actions and learn a piece of music!

I persuaded 3 of our choir members to have a go and after much hilarity, we settled down and worked diligently at a simple arrangement of 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow' on 8 of the bells.

It didn't take my fellow ringers long to realise the amount of concentration needed for tune ringing. A bit of note colouring helped, but by the day of the service, we hadn't managed the whole piece without mistakes. It was with much trepidation that we stood before the congregation after communion and presented our offering. I think there was a lot of praying going on because for the first time we were note perfect!! There was an audible exhalation of breath and smiles from the ringers and the congregation burst into applause!

The handbells were not the only special treat that Sunday.

The tower ringers were out in force and the tower captain spoke at the beginning of the service, telling the congregation briefly about the 8 bells hanging in the tower and how they were rung. He explained that the original 6 bells were increased to 8 in 1910 and there were photographs of the new bells arriving on the back of horse drawn carts through the streets of Lymington.

An invitation to visit the tower after the service was given and he concluded with the ringers' prayer 'Bless with your grace all those that ring here that they and those who hear the bells rung may lift their hearts in praise to Jesus Christ our Lord'

The congregation also joined in the theme of the service by singing bell ringers' hymns. 1. 'O God who madest time and space'*Grant, O Lord the ringers' call On heedful ears may ever fall.* 2 'Let bells peal forth'*Spirit divine, recast our faulty ways, Make them ring true and echo to thy praise.* 3. 'Ring out ye bells'*Ring out ye bells above, let all the earth resound.*

Finally, the church choir sang an anthem – 'All Bells in Paradise' by John Rutter. It was a very fitting piece to close a very special day and I hope that we will continue to ring the handbells at future services.



Kate Hanks

SOUTH-EAST KENT RALLY AT HEADCORN

We were still a day away from the official start of summer, but no-one had told the weather that! We had a beautiful sunny day for everyone's journey to this wonderful part of the Garden of England. Eight teams - Headcorn, West Peckham, St Michael's Blossoming Bells, Bedford Ensemble, Frindsbury, All Saints (Maldon), Lamma and Greywell (Hampshire) gathered for a day of practising a set of five massed ringing pieces. These ranged from the less taxing, such as 'O Waly, Waly', conducted by Keith Rowland through to the more challenging 'My Lord What a Morning' with key changes and accidentals. Sue Quarenden really had her work cut out to get us up to scratch on this piece. Sandra Winter helped to bring out the best from us all with 'Shepherd's Hey'. Dynamics improved and the speed increased as we malleted the bells and 'clicked the sticks'. Eventually we mastered the art of 'freezing' at the end of the piece with

the mallets held high in a cross position! Helen Secker guided us through 'Silent Worship'. Everyone was far too keen to increase the pace, but by easing up a bit we gained time to observe the dynamics and the 'rits'. With 'Rothbury Hills', Philip Bedford helped us to get the more difficult second page, which included his 'twiddly bits' (quaver embellishments) up to a pretty good standard.



Interspersed between the massed ringing pieces many teams performed a solo. This gave people time for a short sit-down, while giving each team a chance to entertain us with a piece or two from their repertoire. Headcorn played 'Telstar' and 'You are my Sunshine' - very apt for the beautiful day we had. 'Early one Morning' was West Peckham's offering and St Michael's Blossoming Bells (suitably named with young players in their team) performed 'Ronde Circle Dance'. The Bedford Handbell Ensemble's rendition was a 14th century piece called 'Quant je suis mai' which Philip translated as 'Truly I am miserable'. The combination of bells and bell plates was delightful. Their second piece was called 'Meeting of the Water'. Frindsbury Handbell Ringers set a cracking pace for a piece called 'Celebration' as it was their 25-year anniversary.



'Bless 'em All' (for the D-day celebration) and Bach's 'Sheep may safely Graze' were performed by All Saints, Maldon. The Lammas team played 'Dona Nobis Pacem', incorporating bells and bell plates as their tribute to VE and VJ Day as well as the Ascension to Pentecost. A lone player from Greywell in Hampshire made the most of the weekend by coming with her husband who visited Tenterden Railway and Bodium Castle while she joined the bell rally.



Headcorn were kind enough to provide refreshments as we arrived, again at lunchtime and lastly at the afternoon break. The surrounding open areas with benches gave folk the chance to enjoy lunch outside if they wished. A raffle was generously supported and raised £203 for the Wisdom Hospice in Medway where a late member of the Frindsbury Handbell ringers had received support and care. there were further donations made separately to the Wisdom Hospice collection tub.



Finally, thanks go to all the conductors and to Headcorn for providing the venue and the refreshments and to all those who attended the event, both players and audience. Everyone was on their way home between 4.30-5.00pm - tired but happy from a good day's ringing.

Margaret Speller, Frindsbury Handbell Ringers

CHALLENGE ACCEPTED!

The rally form said “Enjoy a bit of a challenge – with a guest conductor”. Well, I thought – why not? So, off went the form.

Before the event, we received our playing positions (I was playing F5 and G5); a description of how our guest conductor, Debbie Rice, prepares to bring a new piece to ringers; and her preparation notes on the pieces to be played ... but no music!

So – off to YouTube, for a listen to all five pieces to be played. Five! and all above Level4! I had played one of them before (Fancye by Tim Waugh) at a National Residential Ringing Week; and another was familiar (Aquarius/ Let the Sunshine in - arranged by Sonya Tucker), but not the others. Hmmm! They all looked and sounded tricky! There were lots of quavers – (and I mean lots!); and also changes of key and time. One piece, Stoccato, by Fred Gramman had a bewildering range of time signatures, with many changes, as the piece progressed. The other two were Buglers Holiday by Hart Morris and Dorian Dance by Mike Joy.



On the day, about thirty ringers arrived, to set up the three rows of tables and chairs. Then foams, music stands, bells, chimes, and mallets, provided by Keith Rowland, the Wandle team and the Thompsons, were unloaded and set out.

Then we were given the music! Reality set in as we chatted over tea and biscuits! Well as they say, here goes ... (or as Gilbert and Sullivan said “Nothing venture, nothing win”) and the day began.

After being welcomed by Keith Rowland, Debbie introduced herself – an American, having studied opera to Masters level, then, after taking a job in education, was, as a side issue, introduced to handbells. Debbie saw the potential of handbells to develop musical expertise, and has since travelled all over the world, teaching, conducting and adjudicating; working to promote handbells, and has ended up settling in Canada over recent years.



We were guided through each piece, starting from the end, and working backwards, a section at a time, learning some of Debbie’s techniques, as they were needed for her interpretation of the pieces; and used to develop the musicality of the piece, for presentation to an audience. There was a lot to take in, apart from sight-reading the music! (Still, at least with bells, I only have two to four to deal with, rather than, say on the piano, having to play *all* the notes!)

The day passed very quickly, with two pieces worked through before a lunch break, two more between lunch and a break for tea, and one final session, before we had to say our thank-yous, and pack up to go home.

I won’t go into the technical details, as it would be very long-winded, and boring, as these things are easier to explain or demonstrate, rather than put into words on paper. I did make notes, to avoid forgetting some points, so I can take these back to my teams. Anyway, although it was a very intense, immersive, and exciting experience for me (probably one of the least experienced ringers there), I think I held my own. You can’t appreciate the piece as a whole, though, when you’re concentrating hard on getting the notes and techniques right with music you’ve just got sight of! Sadly, it all seems a bit of a blur, now it’s over.

I must express our thanks to Debbie, for spending the day with us; for her clear and concise instructions, and insight that she was so keen to share with us. Keith, the Wandle team and John and Marianne Thompson too need thanking, for providing all the equipment. Last, but by no means least, thank you Sandra, for providing much needed refreshments ... and yes, there were cakes – delicious pastries!

It leaves me only to ask - when's the next one?

Sue Quarendon Headcorn HR

BARFIELD HANDBELL RINGERS' 60th BIRTHDAY CONCERT

“BARFIELD FAMILY FAVOURITES”

3pm Saturday 25 October 2025

St Mary's Church, Church Gate, Thatcham RG19 3PN

Join us as we celebrate this milestone event with a programme featuring each ringer's choice of their favourite piece of music from our extensive repertoire

Tickets (£6 full / £5 concessions) will be available on the door

Light refreshments available in the interval

FROM THE DIARY OF A SWAY HANDBELL RINGER

For the last 6 months, the Sway Handbell Ringers have been presenting a programme of music to church gatherings entitled '*Reflections. For the Beauty of the Earth*'. This programme was designed to suit quiet listening and the possibility for groups to engage in fund raising for whatever cause was close to their heart.

The programme evolved from the story of the Creation as told in Genesis chapter 1. Each piece of rung music was preceded by a verse from Genesis 1 and the words of a verse of the hymn or song being played. We chose *The Heavens are Telling*, *Morning has Broken*, *All Night, All Day*, *As the Deer Pants for the Water*, *Country Gardens*, *Spring from The Four Seasons*, and *All Creatures of our God and King*. There were opportunities for the listeners to join in with the hymns '*For the Beauty of the Earth*' and '*Praise to the Lord the King of Creation*'.



One particular group's focus was the church Bell Tower Appeal so our contribution was quite apt. Another church was trying to raise funds to repair their church organ. The organist at this church, Tim Rice, joined us and played with us for '*All Creatures of our God and King*'. It was a spine tingling moment as the music just soared all round the church and left us quite breathless. He also played '*Sheep May Safely Graze*' J S Bach and '*The Rose Garden*' Edward MacDowell. I think Tim enjoyed himself too as he and his wife appeared at our next performance at another church and we persuaded him to play again! There remains just one more *Reflections* programme which has been booked for early September and then the music will be filed away and rehearsals will begin for the next event!

Kate Hanks (Sway HR)

STAYCATION RALLY

Gosh it's hot. No it is REALLY hot!!!

All we needed packed in our bags, we were shown our seats.

We put our equipment in order, sat down and drank plenty of water.

Stood up to play but sat as soon as we could and drank some more. Repeat.

Were we at the Women's tennis final in Wimbledon? No, we were at the Staycation Rally at Sanderstead!!!

What a day we had. We were all dressed in summer outfits all brightly coloured and suggesting holidays on the beach. I noticed a knotted handkerchief, several hats and even a flamingo on a music stand and of course lots of coloured shirts and outfits.

Sandra and Martin made us welcome, we were about fifty in number, and we very quickly got ourselves organised and ready to play. There were five very different pieces of music to play and we were lucky enough to have five different conductors to lead us, what a treat. We started with The Jubilee Celebration Polka. Luckily we only rang and did not have to dance to this one (far too hot). From there we went on to All Night All Day, a song I remember from my Guiding days, I was almost (!) tempted to sing along but concentration was needed in my hands so thankfully, for everybody's sake, I resisted. I agreed with our next conductor that it would be very nice if at that moment we could be on the beach perhaps having a paddle. The nearest we got to it was playing Sussex by the Sea. A good fun piece, I think. It is a good job that I have a reasonably good memory because then we were asked to remember our childhood, In my case nearly seventy years ago (!) and remember Captain Pugwash theme tune. Of course as soon as it starts I am taken back to sitting cross legged on the floor in front of the television and watching the Captain and loving it all. Can't do the cross legged bit now, sadly. Great fun with mallets, I think I noticed some ringers bobbing about to the music as it went along.



Our car park attendant!



Wandle Ringers – Martin was conducting, so Sandra was let loose on the bass bells with the mallets!

I thought that our last piece was very beautiful. The Day Thou Gavest Lord Has Ended is a very beautiful song made even nicer when we all started to sing along to it. One of those moments that send a shiver down your spine. Our performance at the end of the day was amazing and I am sure that the new ringers that joined us for the first time will be back to play with us another day, I do hope so.



There was a raffle held during the day and we raised £200 for MacMillan Cancer. We all gave a very enthusiastic round of applause to say thank you to all the organisers and catering crew, before packing everything away and leaving the hall as if we had not been there.



There were no prizes for dressing up today – but Addington 8'oclock Ringers went all out anyway!

Hoping that we did not disturb the wedding in the church next door during the afternoon we went home happy to sit in another chair and drink even more water!

Thank you everyone for a beautiful day, looking forward to the next time.

Marion Millinger, St James Weybridge

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That's what your gift of £200 could do for people living with cancer.

At Macmillan, we give people with cancer everything we've got. If you're diagnosed, your worries are our worries. We will move mountains to help you live life as fully as you can.

But we can't do any of this without gifts like yours, Handbell ringers of Great Britain SE Region. Your support means everything to us. So, thank you.

From all of us at Macmillan.



Why not join in a Christmas Together event?

For the last three years the Christmas Together programme has encouraged teams to get together with another local team or teams to join them to share music, fun and maybe a mince pie!

Thanks to those teams that have attended a Christmas Together event in the last few of years. We have enjoyed hearing and reading about what has happened both in person and in the newsletter.

We have already had enquiries from teams wanting to hold events again this year. A new music pack is being prepared and will have a French theme this year with new arrangements of the traditional French carols *Quelle Est Cette Odeur Agréable* and *Bring A Torch Jeanette, Isabella* along with *Il Est Ne C'est Divine Enfant*.

There is no charge for this music with costs being covered by the region. If you want to join in, please email me with the date of your event, who will be joining in, and a posting address for the music. I will then send you master copies of each piece for you to distribute to those attending.

Happy Christmas Ringing Together!

Martin

19mwinter@gmail.com

HRGB SOUTH EAST REGION DIARY 2025-2026

SAVE THE DATES!

September 27 Ring Something Simple - Sanderstead

November 1 Rally - hosted by Fordingbridge Ringers - Trafalgar School, Downton

November 22 SERBO audition and 1st rehearsal - Cobham Village Hall

2026

January 3 Birthday Rally - hosted by Winkfield St Mary's HR - Charters School, Sunningdale

March 7 AGM and Rally - hosted by Barfield HR - Park House School, Newbury

May 9 SERBO concert - North Camp Methodist Church

May 30 East Kent Rally - hosted by Headcorn Ringers - Headcorn

***** Workshops for 12 Bells, New Ringers and 4-in –hand are planned***
Watch this space**

**SERBO dates 2026: rehearsals at Cobham Village Hall:
31 January; 21 February; 14 March; 28 March; 18 April; 25 April.
9 May concert as above.**

***Would YOUR team like to host an event in the future,
such as rally, a mini (or even a micro!) ring, a workshop ?
Please contact the Secretary! Email sandra@hrgb.org.uk***

SE REGION COMMITTEE AND JOB HOLDERS 2025/26

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