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LEWISHAM DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

THE KENT COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF CHANGE RINGERS

July 2007

See the Website at: www.lewishamdistrict.org.uk for the latest news and information

Reflections on a Year's Ringing

Janis Roddy, Sidcup

It was over a year ago that Alison, David and I stood on the Millennium Bridge in London looking down the river and listening to the bells of St Paul's Cathedral as they rang in the New Year. We only stayed a few minutes as it was bitterly cold so we returned to Southwark Cathedral a little late for Evensong (Frank was singing with the visiting choir that day).

I thought no more about that day, until I saw a paragraph in the parish magazine a week later asking for new bellringers and thought it might be fun to give it a go. I managed to persuade David that he too would like to try (11-12 years old is about the right age to start – plus I didn't want to go on my own!) and the following week told a delighted Yvonne that both David and I were interested in ringing.

Yvonne offered a start date, so I dragged a none-too-keen David out of a warm house and away from his Playstation to St. John's. It was a freezing cold Thursday evening in February and the start of our bellringing careers. Rather than join the usual band practice, which takes place on Wednesdays at 8pm we were to be

taught by Mark and Rachel Backhouse (Christchurch, Erith) who are experts at ringing and teaching learners. Our first hurdle was getting up the tower steps into the ringing room where we paused briefly before going up to view the bells, at which point Mark put mufflers on the bells to reduce the impact our first ringing attempts would have on the neighbours.

Returning to the ringing room Mark explained about bell safety; incredibly important with yards of rope moving very quickly in a small space – accidents can happen. We had to (reluctantly) take off our scarves as these could get caught up in the rope and that whilst sitting and watching other ringers nearby were told to always keep our feet flat on the floor. Mark explained to always do as we were told and fast! Then it was straight into hands-on-the-rope time.

Gradually as the weeks progressed, Mark and Rachel stepped further and further away or sat down as we began to ring bells (still muffled) on our own. We learnt to tie the rope correctly, ring up, to start and stop ringing when

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A Word from the Editor

Those of you who are eager readers of the Lewisham District Newsletter might notice a couple of changes in this issue. In addition to the usual mix of district news, submitted articles and District Meeting minutes, there is a directory of e-mail contact details for the district officers on page 3. This was requested by a district member and from now on all you have to do to find all the e-mail addresses you'll need is glance at the district newsletter. The contact details are also available in the KCACR handbook and on the website. Any other suggestions for improving the newsletter are most welcome - my e-mail address can be found on the opposite page.

It looks like I've run out of space in this column, so I'll leave you to get on with reading the interesting bits and I hope I'll see as many of you as possible at future district events.

Forthcoming District Events:

District Meeting: Saturday 14th July, Chelsfield, St Martin of Tours, 3.00pm ringing, 4.30pm service then tea, meeting and evening ringing.
Names for tea to names4tea@lewishamdistrict.org.uk

District Practice: Saturday 28th July, Cudham, SS Peter & Paul, 7-9pm

District Practice: Saturday 18th August, Woolwich, St Mary Magdalene, 7-9pm

District Practice: Saturday 8th September, Chislehurst, St Nicholas, 10am-12pm. Note: Morning practice

District Practice: Tuesday 18th September, Southwark, Cathedral Church of St Saviour, 6:30-8:30pm. Note: Tuesday practice

Please read the Cathedral rules for visiting bands especially if you will be bringing juniors.

County 6 bell Striking Contest: Saturday 22nd September, Chevening (Tonbridge District).

All District Practice venues to be confirmed

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Lewisham District Trivia:

Where is the oldest ringable bell hung for full circle ringing in the Lewisham District?
(Answer at the bottom left corner of page 5)

District Ringing Master's Bit

Rupert Cheeseman, District Ringing Master



Since this is my first article for the Newsletter as Ringing Master, I thought that I should do a quick introduction for those of you that don't know me. My name is Rupert Cheeseman and I've been ringing at St Paulinus, Crayford for over 20 years now. Previously I was editor of the District newsletter for 5 years so I know what a difficult task Dom has in getting people to contribute to it. I'm now finding out what a difficult task it is to get people to attend District Events!!

Regular monthly practices have continued to be held with varying attendances from the good (Foots Cray, Bromley Common) to the bad (Deptford, Greenwich). Those that have attended though have had plenty of opportunity to ring something that they are practicing, like Plain Hunt, Grandsire, Plain Bob Doubles or Triples, with a steady band.

I've managed to visit 17 of the District's towers since I've been Ringing Master and will do my best to visit the rest over the remainder of the year so at least people can put a face to a name and maybe not be so intimidated about coming along to a District Event!

Please keep an eye on the District website, www.lewishamdistrict.org.uk, to check when events are happening. In particular, there will be a morning practice on 8th Sept which is something that people asked for at last year's ADM so please come along and support it. The District's annual trip up to Southwark Cathedral will happen on Tuesday 18th September, from 6:30 to 8:30pm. Anybody is welcome to come up and have a ring on this 48cwt ring of 12, the seventh heaviest in the World. Over the years many people have come up and had their first blows on 12 at Southwark. It is also possible to go up and see the bells and get a view over London from the roof.

District Officer E-mail Directory:

Website:

www.lewishamdistrict.org.uk

Chairman:

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chairman@lewishamdistrict.org.uk

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newsletter@lewishamdistrict.org.uk

Around the District

Ash by Wrotham

It was good to see y'all at district practice on March the 31st, especially as so many traffic jams made the Journey even more difficult (we were starting to worry when no one turned up 45 minutes into the practice!). Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves and many made progress top their own personal targets (Yes, Rachel I'm still sweating on Plain. Hunt). We had the pleasure in March of the Church Youth Club paying us a visit and they had the opportunity for a few pulls each as well as a go on the Hand Bells and a visit to the belfry. Ash tower itself has managed to develop a hole in the side (some of the flint and cement has fallen out) and a leak in the stair turret roof, but is still ringable. The church authorities are in the process of organising the work and fundraising. We await enlightenment as to what is expected of us. The knock on effect is that there will be no trips up the Tower at the Fete (a nice little earner), and we'll be on the field - any fund raising tips are welcome!

John and Gabrielle Stook

Beckenham

These are exciting times for the Beckenham band. As part of a series of tower improvements started several years ago we have finally laid the carpet which has been stored in the clock room since before many of the band started ringing. The colour has been cunningly chosen to match the sally fluff produced by our ropes and everyone agrees the room looks much better for it.

On the ringing front things are going equally well. With the help of some other district ringers practice nights are touching the rarefied heights of Glasgow and Belfast Surprise Major, and the band are working towards ultimately ringing a peal of Horton's Four.

Dominic Meredith

Crayford:

We continue to struggle away and are grateful for our regular visitors on Sunday and Tuesday. Practices are useful for those that attend with plenty of Plain Hunt and Plain Bob rung. Steady progress is being made and hopefully quarters can be attempted soon to help progress further.

Rupert Cheeseman

Bromley Common

We rang a quarter of Plain Bob Doubles on Thursday 24th May. This was dedicated to the 300th anniversary of the birth of Charles Wesley and rung to coincide with a service at nearby Bromley Common Methodist Church led by Jeanette Crouch, one of our ringers. Also to mark the recent appointment of canon Michael Insley as Diocesan Theologian, Rochester Diocese. Oliver Sargent, a Hayes (Kent) ringer, joined us and this was his first successful quarter.

Of late our Thursday practices have been bolstered by a contingent from Hayes and various visitors allowing us to ring a number of methods including Stedman Doubles and touches of Grandsire Triples.

Chris Lawrence

**Kent County Association of Change Ringers
Bromley Common, Kent
St Luke**

Thursday, 24 May 2007 in 44mins (7³/₄cwt)
1260 Plain Bob Doubles

1. Jackie Duke
2. Ken Gristwood
3. Alastair D Scott
4. Oliver Sargent
5. Chris Lawrance (c)
6. Rob Duke

First Quarter-peal: 4

To celebrate the 300th Anniversary of the birth of Charles Wesley and the appointment of Canon Michael Insley as Diocesan Theologian for the Rochester Diocese.

Rung to coincide with a service at Bromley Common Methodist Church led by Jeanette Crouch, a ringer at this tower.

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instructed, ring in sequence and to ring down afterwards when we finish (although I am still struggling with this!).

We were really pleased and a little nervous when Mark felt we were ready to join regular band practice on a Wednesday. We were made very welcome by everyone! The bells are not muffled for regular practice nights and the first thing we noticed was the noise, its impossible to have a conversation without shouting!

We're coming up to a year of ringing now and we are still learning the basics and have an extremely long way to go – it's a lifetime's art and I am pleased David has started young, although it's open to anyone with an interest and commitment. It's also not something that you can go home and practice (although I use both hands on the cord to draw the blinds in my office!) so there's no pressure or expectation to return the following week as a total expert, everyone learns at their own speed.

I still pull the rope too hard and make lots of mistakes and David and I have experienced a range of emotions (I always get incredibly nervous beforehand) but there is always a great feeling of satisfaction and real pleasure hen we get it right. It's challenging, good fun and quite addictive.

We've met some really great people and made new friends. We've visited other towers (Cudham and Dartford) and have now joined the Kent County Association of Change Ringers (KCACR). We'd like to thank Yvonne for organising our beginners' training, Mark and Rachel for their continued support as they visit out tower every third Wednesday in the month and not forgetting our own band

KCACR HANDBOOK

As was mentioned at the last district meeting Frank Lewis has supplied a some inspiration for selling space in next year's KCACR handbook. Below are a few ideas on the sort of people who might be approached at a local level for advertising.

Several categories are of special interest to outing organisers. Don't forget that quite a few people going on ringing outings are not actually ringers, and spend some time wandering around the locality while ringing is going on. The fact that there's a classy fabric shop in Cranbrook or steam trains in Tenterden could well induce mum or grandpa to come on an outing.

Pubs/Restaurants/Cafes/Chippies: Especially those near popular outing towers ("don't forget to have your lunch at the Bull when your outing comes to Ambrige" sort of thing). An advertiser pub had at least three outing parties from outside the county in 2005.

Local specialist shops: Arty crafty shops, potteries, gourmet cheese shops, widget museums, you name it – quite a few local ringers don't know what's going on in the next District!

Estate agents: Ringers move house, and often

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Trivia Answer:

The oldest ringable bells in Lewisham District are the 3rd and 4th at Downe - both cast between 1385 and 1418.

Information from Dickon Love's 'Church Bells of Kent' Website.

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they move into the area from a distance. If they're enthusiastic ringers they'll almost certainly get hold of a copy of the Handbook before they arrive.

Coach/minibus companies: Outing organisers again could be interested.

Specialist services: Garages, computer experts, peal board writers, plumbers, electricians etc. We all use some of these sorts of businesses at some time, so they're worth a thought.

Technical Info:

The Handbook is A5 and we shall be printing around 2000 copies, to be distributed free to all resident members of the KCACR. In addition quite a few are purchased by people outside the county for organising outings, grabs, peal tours etc. Advertising rates are currently as follows:

Full page (120 x 180 mm): £35

Half page (120 x 90 mm): £25

There are currently no plans to increase the advertising rates. Queries can be sent to frank@kcacr.org.uk

Copy should be camera-ready (i.e. ready to print), although it may be possible to organise typesetting if required. Try to get copy as good as possible (photocopies of ads in newspapers/parish magazines are NOT 'good' in this context).

Payment should be by cheque payable to the KCACR and sent to me at my address in the Handbook. Ad copy may be sent to fwlewis@bopenworld.com. Last date for copy is 31st December 2007.

120 Club

Rachel Backhouse

120 Club draw results April-June 2007

April 21st drawn at Bromley Common (District Meeting)

- 1st 17 Graeme Jefferson (Dartford)
- 2nd 64 Rachel Backhouse (Christchurch, Erith)
- 3rd 110 120 Club
- 4th 88 120 Club

May 19th drawn at Footscray (District Practice)

- 1st 6 Mrs ED Byers (Beckenham)
- 2nd 81 Roger Long (St Nicholas, Chislehurst)
- 3rd 8 Gabrielle Hayes (Ash)
- 4th 26 Jim Rooke (Chelsfield)

June 9th drawn at Greenwich (District Practice)

- 1st 32 David Brown (Bromley Parish)
- 2nd 18 Karen Robinson (Dartford)
- 3rd 48 Sue Fisher (Chelsfield)
- 4th 20 Deryck Jones (Dartford)

I have sold 91 shares for this year, a little down on previously, so if you still haven't quite got round to it do please contact me.



A View from the Outside

Editor's Note: While I was surfing the internet one day I stumbled across an article written by the prize-winning American author Orson Scott Card, detailing his visit up a bell tower in Christchurch, New Zealand. I always find a non-ringer's perspective on ringing to be fascinating and have reproduced the article below.

The original article can be found at: <http://www.hatrack.com/osc/reviews/everything/2005-04-03.shtml>. All rights are reserved by the author.

I had two images of bellringers. One was of a maniac cackling with glee as he pulled on the rope of a solitary bell. The other was of a clerkish-looking fellow playing the keyboard of a modern carillon, where electronic keys trigger the striking of hammers against bells.

Recently, though, I learned that there is an old and wonderful tradition of bands of bellringers who work in the towers of churches -- mostly in England, but scattered also throughout the world. Never paid more than a token salary, they learn to play one of the most complicated instruments in music: a towerful of bells.

I first heard about them from one of their number, Alex Lindsay, who had recently returned to New Zealand after a year in England. Now, Alex is the kind of man who, when you mention some absurdly dangerous sport, can immediately tell you one of his most awful experiences while actually doing it. I won't tell you his experience with jumping out of an airplane with his chute harness too loosely strapped around his legs.

But the passion of his life might well be one of the safest: ringing bells in Anglican churches and cathedrals.

Alex showed me how the music of belltowers is annotated, in series of numbers called "changes" that make no sense at all until you see bellringers in action. Not having a belltower in his satchel, he

recommended that when we visited Christchurch, New Zealand, we stop in on Tuesday night and see if the bellringers there would allow us to witness their practice.

So we did, though not without trepidation. For of course the first question they asked us was whether we were ringers, and we had to say no -- and not likely to become such, since the nearest belltower to Greensboro of the sort they ring is in Charleston.

But, outsiders though we were, they let us in. Up the winding stair to the belfry we climbed, glad that we'd been using the stairs in our hotel more than the elevator, so we were sort of in shape. It helped, too, that the stairs had a closed center instead of the open shaft like one of the towers we had climbed in Gaudi's Templo de la Sagrada Familia in Barcelona. In Christchurch Cathedral, you didn't have to pray your way to the top. Just climb.

There were a couple of visiting ringers there that night, and some new ringers who were still learning the technique. Practice for the newest ringer seemed to be nothing but repeatedly ringing the same bell. At first I thought, Is this like the wax on, wax off sequence in *The Karate Kid*, where you first build up the muscles needed to do the real job later?

But soon I learned there was something much more difficult going on. For she was not just ringing the bell -- she was ringing the bell to an absolutely regular rhythm. She was concentrating. And it was hard.

Because there's a double stroke. The bell is mounted on a wheel, and when you pull on the rope, it rotates once, upward; then you pull again, and the bell swings all the way around to tilt, once again, upward. Only on one pass the rope is wound up, and in the other direction, it unwinds. So each time, you are pulling on a different part of the rope.

And unlike any other musical instrument I know of,

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there is a long gap between the ringer's action and the actual sound of the bell. So it's not just a matter of pulling; you are learning how long it takes from the pull to the sound. And the two pulls don't necessarily have the same time lag. So if you just pull in a steady rhythm, you'll have a syncopated ring pattern -- ding-DONG ... ding-DONG -- instead of a steady DONG .. DONG .. DONG.

Gradually more ringers showed up, and it was time to start the group practice. The youngest ringer, a beginner, was put in the starting position -- for reasons that soon became clear. The others each took a bell rope; of the six of them, the conductor was in the fifth position.

By then the visiting Englishman had cheerfully explained to us much of what was going on -- for instance, that's how we knew that bellringers call their groups "bands," and that the ringers at Westminster Cathedral are quite exclusive, but that most others are welcoming of strangers.

The young man announced that he was starting, and counted, and then pulled.

Of course, nothing happened -- it would take a long moment for his bell to ring. But before that sound came, the woman in the 2 position had already pulled; and as the first bell was sounding, the woman in position 3 pulled her rope.

In other words, the rhythm they were finding had nothing at all to do with the actual sounds they heard, and everything to do with what they saw -- they were doing a dance together, keeping perfect rhythm, and only after they pulled did the sound of the bells tell them what they had wrought.

Which means, of course, that mistakes were audible throughout downtown Christchurch. There is no way to practice bellringing secretly.

The experienced bellringers kept their rhythm perfectly, regardless of what the young man in the first position did. Most of the time he was right in time, or close; sometimes, though, he didn't keep pace perfectly and his bell sounded after too long a gap from 6, and sometimes so late that 1 sounded just

after 2. But he did not apologize or break his concentration; he simply recovered the rhythm and did better with each change.

For they did not continue going in sequence around the circle: 1-2-3-4-5-6. The conductor would call out, "Four to Five," and then "Four to Six," and the ringer in position 4 would now ring as the fifth or sixth in the sequence. Or something like that -- they knew exactly what was intended, and what the rest of them were supposed to do about it, and each person pulled at exactly the right time to ring the bells in the new order.

There is no other musical instrument that requires such perfect awareness of what everyone else in the ensemble is doing. For they were, in effect, playing the same instrument. It was as if six people were playing the same saxophone, each responsible for one of the fingerings, and in order to play a tune they all had to trust all the others to do their job exactly right; but whether they did or not, you had to get it right.

No wonder they are such an accepting society; anyone who has mastered this art has learned how to subsume himself so utterly and selflessly in a group that it would be absurd to deny a ringer entrance to any tower in the world.

This sort of belltower is actually rare, outside of England. Of perhaps 4500 towers in the world, all but a few hundred are in England. It's a secret part of Anglicanism, apparently, that such bands of lifetime volunteer musicians should exist among them.

I felt privileged to watch them; but I also felt like an intruder. Our very presence was a potential distraction, and it would be wrong to do anything to take their mind from the music. So when they paused for a rest, we took our leave, with many thanks, and made our way back down the tower.

One of them followed to make sure we figured out how to open the multi-locked door -- help that we needed, I might add. And as we walked away from the cathedral, headed for our dinner at Strawberry Fare (quite possibly the best dessert restaurant in the world), we heard the bells ringing out over the square, following us a long way up the street, and I thought: I know what goes into this music. It made it all the sweeter to my ears.



The Cinque Ports Ringing Centre at Lyminge

Saturday, 28th July 2007
“GAINING ROPESIGHT”

The course is suitable for those who can ring Plain Hunt, and perhaps treble to Plain Bob, “by knowing the numbers”. Techniques for acquiring ropesight will be introduced, using the plain course of a method where the order of the bells is known. These techniques will then be applied to situations where the order is unknown. The aim is to progress to hunting the treble to plain Doubles or Minor methods.

Programme:

- 10.00 Introduction and familiarisation with the bells
- 10.30 Ringing session.
- 11.00 Ropesight techniques explained
- 11.15 Ringing session
- 12.30 Lunch at Etchinghill
- 14.00 Ringing Session
- 15.15 Discussion break
- 15.30 Further ringing
- 16.15 Conclusion

There is a charge of £5 per student to cover administration costs and to contribute towards bell maintenance. Please make cheques payable to “The Cinque Ports Ringing Centre”.

An application form is available by email from Barbara Dale, barbaradale@fastmail.fm or telephone 01304 823217. A form is also available for printing on the Ringing Centre page at <http://www.kcacr.org.uk/>.

Minutes from the Last Meeting



THE KENT COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF CHANGE RINGERS
LEWISHAM DISTRICT

**MINUTES OF QUARTERLY DISTRICT MEETING AT BROMLEY
COMMON, SATURDAY 21st APRIL 2007**

1. Apologies for absence

- 27 people attended the meeting.
- Apologies for absence were received from: David Kingston (Bromley), Philippa Rooke (Chelsfield), Sara Hardy (Beckenham), Doug Fisher (Biggin Hill), Les Brett (Erith Christchurch), Nick Wilkins (Chelsfield), Esther Correia (Dartford), Jeannette Crouch (Bromley Common).

2. Minutes of the Quarterly District Meeting at Christchurch Erith on 31st January

- The minutes were approved on the proposal of Jim Rooke, seconded by Chris Webb.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

- Mini ring for Olympics now purchased and available – contact Roger Booth to borrow it.

4. KCACR Committee Meeting report

- Handbook now published – if any corrections needed please tell Alice Baverstock. Looking to increase number of advertisers – there will be ideas on recruiting advertisers in the next district newsletter.
- Alice Baverstock will have a list of redundant churches for the district.
- The Ringing Foundation is a new ringing charity just set up aimed at looking after ringers and training (rather than a bell restoration fund)
- A “framework for training ringers” is on the Central Council website and Brenda Barton has copies.
- County 8 bell striking competition: districts are asked to give their views on whether should be set method or open method. There has previously been a set method and set touch. Variety of views were expressed including alternative compromise solutions of – alternating between these two options, or the host District for the competition selecting the method. A vote gave following distribution of views:
 - Set method: 3
 - Bands choose what they ring: 11
 - Alternative compromise solution: 6

5. Election of new members

The following new members were elected:

New member	Tower	Proposed by	Seconded by
Audrey Ludder	Chelsfield	James Rooke	Nancy Gay

6. 120 club draw

This was the last meeting of the year at which the 120 club would be drawn. Letters will be sent to towers asking for members for next year which commences in April. The draw took place and the winning numbers for this month were:

1 st Graham Jefferson	17
2 nd Rachel Backhouse	64
3 rd Unsold	120
4 th Unsold	88

7. Child Protection

- Nigel Spencer (01303 260524) County Child Protection Officer came to talk and find out about

-
- District child protection practice.
 - Has been subject of recent debate. House of Bishops has published “Protecting God’s children” about child protection which includes parts relevant to voluntary helpers in church. Doesn’t mention ringers specifically but sections on voluntary workers apply to them. Also the Central Council has published child protection guidance specifically for ringers. Key difference between the two sets of guidance is that the Bishops guidance says everyone should have a CRB check. The Central Council suggest that only Tower Captain, vice captain and those involved in training are checked.
 - There was a poll about the CRB check situation of towers represented at the meeting:
 - Towers where everyone has been asked to have CRB check: Chelsfield [1]
 - Towers where just few CRB checked: Bromley Parish, Beckenham, Foots Cray, Dartford, Biggin Hill, Eltham, Erith Christchurch, Crayford, Bromley Common [9]
 - Towers where no discussion but no under 18s: Greenwich, Woolwich [2]
 - KCACR policy is to argue for following the Central Council guidance, but if the PCC insist to have everyone checked.
 - Nigel pointed out that there is of course a serious issue here and CRB checking is not the real solution. All need to be alert to possibility of child protection offences or accusations and make sure that there is always more than one adult present when children are being trained. If this isn’t happening its important point out to people that they are laying themselves open to accusations (whether or not they are doing anything wrong).
 - Rupert will put a request on the district website if other towers want to email information their situations or experiences.

8. Forthcoming events

Event	At	Date
District practice	Deptford	28 April (evening)
District practice	Foots Cray	19 May (evening)
District practice	Greenwich	9 June (evening)
County training day – bell handling clinic	TBA	16 June
District training day – bob doubles and minor	TBA	23 June
Quarterly district meeting	Chelsfield	4 July

9. Any other business

- It is Lewisham district’s turn to host the County AGM next year on Easter Monday 24th March. Main issue is to find a venue suitable for about 100? attendees. This will be an item for discussion at the next District meeting.
- County 8 bell competition – Lewisham district came 4th.
- District striking competition – disappointingly only 3 teams entered. Chelsfield won.
- There is a new arrangement for signing up for teas for district meetings using a generic email address on the district website. The secretary apologised for lack of a notice of this meeting in the Ringing World and will try to do better for next meeting.

10. Vote of thanks

The Chairman proposed a vote of thanks to the Cannon Michael Innsley for conducting the service, to John Castle for playing the organ and the Bromley Common ringers for the excellent tea.

Agenda for the Next District Meeting

THE KENT COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF CHANGE RINGERS
LEWISHAM DISTRICT

Quarterly District Meeting at Chelsfield, Saturday 14th July 2007

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the Quarterly District Meeting at Bromley Common on 21st April
4. Election of new members
5. 120 club draw
6. Forthcoming events
7. Any other business
8. Vote of thanks

Next District Practice

Saturday 28th July 2007 - Cudham, 7-9pm

Everyone Welcome
