

## **20 Years of Campanology**

One Sunday in 1998, Essex Radio came to St. Peter's Church in Great Totham looking for bell ringers to ring for the Millennium. This got me interested and I was interviewed by Karen Smith, followed by David Barclay showing me how to ring a bell. This looks fairly easy, but actually there's a lot that goes into getting it right. On Friday nights I went to practice, where Mick Edwards would teach me to ring, although rounds and call changes were the limit at which I felt comfortable, ringing six bells at St. Peter's. I tended to ring the second, although occasionally I would ring treble or third. Years ago, a curtain would be closed to separate the ringers from the congregation. Now there is a rope to stop people walking in amongst us whilst we are ringing for health and safety reasons, of course. This is attached to the back pew and a hook on the inside church wall with another hook behind the font.

The Tower has a captain and in 1998 when I started, the Tower captain was Edwin Parsons. Often we would go ringing at other venues around the country and would join a convoy of cars and venture to ring for weekends in places such as Bath, Bournemouth, Gloucester, and Wales to name just a few. My first 12 bell tower was Bath Abbey – Wow! Now that was an eye opener as we had to climb up to the roof to get into the tower to ring. Days out were also spent ringing in country churches with lunch in village pubs. We were often accompanied by our other halves, making these events very enjoyable.

A tower clean day would regularly take place, where the area around the bells and where we stood would be cleaned. The end of the ropes, dubbed "Scruffy Sallys", would also be trimmed with a little razor to smarten any scruffy ends. Cleaning efforts were usually rewarded with tea or coffee and biscuits or cake.

We ring for special occasions, including Sunday services, Christmas, Easter, Mothering Sunday, weddings, funerals, flower festivals and competitions. We also have Ringing Days where other towers come and try out our bells. A few years ago, I took on the job of wedding ringers co-ordinator where I have to organise six ringers, usually to ring for a given length of time as the bride and groom leave the church.

Our uniform is red polo shirt, red sweat shirt, black trousers and black shoes. However, one Christmas I suggested that we, (us girls) wore tight black skirts and fishnet tights for the midnight service. Luckily candlelight meant that not many in the congregation were aware of our attire!

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It's now 20 years since I began my campanology and 10 years since Janice became Captain of our tower. In all that time of ringing, I have only once experienced an incidence of a rope breaking. This was not at St. Peter's but at a tower we were visiting. I suspect this had occurred more than once though, as the ringer just calmly said "Oh that happens". The rope actually broke and fell to the floor like a curled-up snake! This just shows that it's very important that bells should be serviced regularly.



Well thank you dear friends, ringers and families, happy memories. Ding Dong, time to move along.

*Lindsey Phillips*

## **1st Beacon Hill Scout Group**



1st Beacon Hill has been in existence for over 60 years and has always been a very successful and popular scout group. We have Beavers, Cubs and Scouts and it is only possible to maintain these sections with the dedication and enthusiasm of the leaders and helpers who volunteer their time.

We currently have three scout leaders, two of whom (due to work changes) will be leaving the Group at the end of the summer term. Our third leader has agreed to stay for another year to aid a hopefully seamless handover, plus he genuinely enjoys it. He is our resident paramedic and an experienced leader, but is unable to head the section as his work shift patterns mean he is only able to help every other week.

Leading scouts can be challenging; it can also be brilliant fun, very rewarding and fulfilling, just knowing that you're helping the people who are our future. We do not want this section to have to close, but we do need at least two people to come forward to volunteer.

No previous experience is necessary and you would be supported by the rest of the Beacon Hill team and leaders. Any required training would be given. If you think you would be able to volunteer, please contact me on [janet\\_richardson\\_53@hotmail.com](mailto:janet_richardson_53@hotmail.com) or visit [www.1stbeaconhill.org.uk](http://www.1stbeaconhill.org.uk). You can also call me for a chat or more information on 01621 893060.

*Janet Richardson*