

## EACR Annual Dinner 2013

The 59th Essex Association Annual Dinner took place on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> October at The County Hotel, Chelmsford. Our guests for the evening were the Revd Canon Peter Mann, Team Rector of the Harwich Peninsular Team Ministry with his wife Janet, and Chris McCarthy, from Bishops Stortford and Jenny Holt.

There was time to mingle before dinner and catch up with old friends and meet some new ones. One conversation I had introduced me to the concept of Alphabet Weekends. The idea is that as a couple, each of you take it in turn to organise an activity representing the next letter of the alphabet; something unusual or different, or simple and inexpensive. It has to be a complete surprise for your partner, you just need to advise them what to wear. It got me thinking about what some ringers Alphabet Weekends might look like: B bells, C campanology, P peal, Q quarter, R ringing.... you get the picture.



Smiley, happy people. Members of the Southern District enjoying the evening.... and the odd glass of wine!

As usual, the staff at the County did us proud with a superb three course meal followed by coffee and petit fours.

The formal part of the evening followed with an opening speech by the Master, Brian Meads. He recollected some of his personal highlights of the last twelve months including the Northern District Carol Service at which he played the organ, the North East District curry, Annual District Meetings in the Northern, South Western, Southern and North Western Districts, his first peal on four (probably not his last!), the ITTS course run at Coggeshall. He welcomed the invitation from the Chelmsford Cathedral ringers for each district to ring a quarter peal to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the Warner 12 in September 1913, saying that it gave an opportunity to ring what might never have happened otherwise; some districts had return visits booked! He congratulated the Essex Young Eagles on coming 4<sup>th</sup> at the National Youth Competition and their organiser, Christina Brewster. He thanked the Social Committee for arranging this evenings event and the valuable contribution the dinner makes to the cohesion of the Association. Finally he proposed a toast to the Church by stating that one of our Association's Objects to further the work of the Church by the ringing of bells and that we were in debt to the Church for providing the facilities for us to practice our art.



Revd Canon Peter Mann  
and his wife

Revd Canon Peter Mann replied by thanking the Association for its support to the restoration project at Harwich. He felt that by rights, he should not be giving this speech. At his first parish in Carlisle the tower was popular with visiting ringers. He thought he would be supportive to the ringers by going into the ringing room during a quarter peal, the look he got from the ringers could have reversed global warming. He described ringers as fantastic and brave considering what was hanging above their heads. He recalled one time when the verger was away and he had to wind the clock; the weights came up but then the cable broke and the weights fell back to the ground and resembled a picture from the Blitz. He was adamant it wasn't his fault! His next parish had no bells, a hospital had been built next to the Church and not everyone understood the healing properties of bell ringing!

During his time at Harwich he feels that the bells are appreciated by most people and understands that in ringing terms, they are described as "difficult"! There are great ambitions to renew the bells in time however, with help from Trinity House, fundraising and voluntary work, they were able to replace headstocks, wheels and ropes. He thanked the Association again for its support of the project and hopes that the bells of Harwich ring over the town for many years to come.

Chris McCarthy took his turn next. He said that he thought ringers were a clever bunch. He asked everyone to stand up, then asked them to start clapping. He had just won his bet with Brian that he could get a standing ovation within the first two minutes of his speech. After we'd all settled down again, he explained that we all had a job to do: his was to deliver a speech and ours was to listen. The challenge was that he should finish his before we finished ours! He went on to say that "clever people" was a good description for ringers. Guests at the Dinner that he knew personally harboured many skills, Roy Threadgold was a leading light within the Braintree area in Esperanto; Gary Howard was an expert in IT and a great musician, Dorothy Morgan was a wizard at finance and all things Welsh; and Fred Bone was a legend – in his own mind! He had known Brian since the 1970's and in the 1990's they went on a peal tour together. Anyone who knows Brian knows he can regale stories and one evening they decided to play a joke on him by planting esoteric information before him. Quotes from Wordsworth and conspiratorial conversations eventually managed to dumbfound him into silence. Chris then started a chemistry lesson when describing the Central Council most of which was lost on me, I had had a few glasses of wine by now! However, the Council had met in Chelmsford in 1957 and discussed a motion deprecating the College of Campanology, an effort to standardise ringing teaching and qualifications for teachers. There was strong opposition but the motion was passed. In the subsequent years 30 teachers across England and overseas were established. As we entered this decade Brian was chairing something very similar through the Ringing Foundation. Chris finished



Chris McCarthy in full flow

with a toast to the Essex Association and the very, very clever people who were here this evening, and those who were unable to make it tonight.

The Master finished the formal proceedings by thanking our guests and their partners for being with us and the ladies were presented with a bouquet each.

With the speeches completed, the sweepstake was won by Steve Nash who came nearest. The official timing being 48 minutes, 23 seconds! The raffle followed which raised funds for bell restoration work and there was plenty of time for everyone to mingle and socialise – some into the early hours of Sunday morning!

Thank you to Social Committee for their hard work in organising another fantastic evening for ringers far and wide to gather in their finery.

Vicki Chapman