

The 2016 Southern Universities Association Weekend in Cambridge



Dancing the night away

The annual assemblage of academic individuals from the south of England, affectionately known as the SUA, is warmly anticipated every year. This time around the responsibility for organising fell squarely on the shoulders of the Cambridge University Guild of Change Ringers, who gleefully welcomed participants from Southampton, Oxford, London, Bristol and Leicester universities on the second weekend in November.

Festivities kicked off on Friday night, with inordinate attendance at our weekly practice at St Bene't's, the numbers being bolstered by members from Bristol and Southampton. The highlight of the ringing was the mysterious never-ending touch, which began without a conductor, continued as simultaneous Plain Bob Doubles and Minor, and yet somehow never found rounds. Some say no two ringers managed exactly the same number of whole pulls ... Our successes in the belfry, however, were superseded by social success in the Cambridge Guild's favourite pub, The Hopbine, and a restful night in preparation for the main event on Saturday.

It always rains on SUA, and Cambridge wasn't granted a pass-out. Thankfully, there were plenty of cosy indoor activities to keep us all amused; Oxford and London joined us

in time for open ringing at the glorious heavy eight at Our Lady and the English Martyrs, where commendable touches of all shapes and sizes were rung by a wide range of people. This was followed after lunch by equally enjoyable performances at the sublime new twelve of Great St Mary's in the heart of Cambridge.

All the while, bands were dropping in and out to compete in one or other of the two striking competitions taking place; in the morning, the CUGCR's primary practice night tower, St Andrew the Great, was the stage for a tussle for the eight-bell trophy. The rules of the competition are straightforward: ring six minutes of call changes, or at least 224 changes of methods. Thankfully for Oxford, this can consist of multiple plain courses. Unfortunately for Oxford, a plain course of Grandsire Triples is only 70 changes. This rather embarrassing oversight cleared the way for Cambridge, as the only other eligible team, to take the tankard, first place being snatched from them

by some slick call change ringing from Southampton's scratch effort.

In the afternoon, the fight moved to the bare-knuckle arena of St Bene't's, a 13cwt six which punch well above their weight. As such, any attempts at minor – or indeed doubles with an inexperienced or intoxicated band – were doomed to fall short. Success was found in the warm embrace of call changes, or alternatively in Plain Bob Doubles with attitude. It was this vigour which saw Cambridge take the title, hitting a peal speed almost a whole hour faster than the most sluggish effort – home advantage certainly played a significant role. Mention must also go the combined universities team, who fielded a band with one member from each of those attending, truly encapsulating the spirit of the event. My thanks go to Jonathan Agg and Dave Richards for judging the eight-bell competition, and to Max Drinkwater for the six-bell, particularly since they managed the correct result so admirably.

With the serious business of striking behind us, the party moved to a local church hall to eat, drink, and dance the night away with vats of chilli, beer from Milton Brewery, and a very fine Ceilidh band. We proved our dearth of originality when asked to freestyle. In a ceilidh – I ask you! Nevertheless, under instruction everyone danced with aplomb, swinging, skipping and do-si-doing to the point of exhaustion, eventually retiring for the night on the salubrious church hall floor, or a bicycle/minibus journey home.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who helped out in any sense to make the event such a success, including everyone who simply came along to enjoy themselves. See you all next year!

OLI BARDSLEY
Master, Cambridge University Guild

Eight-Bell

Rank	Band	Method	Percentage
1st	Southampton (scratch)	Call Changes	77%
2nd	Cambridge	Plain Bob Triples	74%
3rd	Bristol (scratch)	Call Changes	72%
4th	Oxford	Grandsire Triples	69%
=5th	Cambridge (scratch)	Call Changes	63%
=5th	Oxbridge	St Clements Major	63%

Six-Bell

Rank	Band	Method	Percentage
1st	Cambridge	Plain Bob Doubles	91.8%
2nd	Oxford	Plain Bob Doubles	90.8%
3rd	Great Western Railway	Call Changes	89.1%
4th	Oxford (scratch)	Call Changes	86.0%
5th	M4	Plain Bob Doubles	82.9%
6th	Combined Universities	Plain Bob Doubles	82.5%
7th	Southampton (scratch)	Plain Bob Doubles	81.3%
8th	Cambridge (scratch)	Call Changes	78.8%
9th	Soton (scratch scratch)	St Clements Minor	76.7%
10th	Southampton (scratch scratch scratch)	Coco the Cat Diff Bob Minor	72.0%



The Southampton band refresh themselves after eight-bell victory