

WHAT CUDHAM and DOWNE CHURCHES HAVE BEEN DOING DURING 2023

Including organisation reports 2023

Cudham Churchwardens' Report

As Churchwardens we are responsible for ensuring that services are offered and are conducted in accordance with Canon law, the maintenance of the fabric and care of the contents of the church, and the maintenance of the churchyard. We take an overview of all that goes on in the life of this Church.

Early in the year we said goodbye to our curate, Rev Rachel Archer, as she headed to Liverpool to take up the rectorship of St Matthew with St James in Mossley Hill. Several of us travelled there for her installation and we wished her and the family well in their new life.

Over the year Kim Curle, Licensed Schools and Families Evangelist, has gradually taken a more active role in the life of our Church, and we welcome this.

We met regularly with the Vicar to keep au fait with issues of church life with which he deals. We acknowledge the hard work of our Parish Administrator and the PCC Treasurer and Secretary and thank all members of the PCC for serving on it. Sadly the year saw a decline in the numbers attending services on Sundays which has impacted on volunteers willing and able to take a role.

The annual check of the fire extinguishers, the servicing of the heating system and the clock, and the tuning of the organ, the monthly checks of the emergency lighting in the South Chapel and Tower, and the bi-annual PAT testing have all been carried out. Unfortunately, though, the clock has ceased to work and a decision as to whether to repair or replace has yet to be made. The rainwater goods (gutters, valley gutters and downpipes) were checked and cleared in February. The church inside is kept clean and tidy and minor repairs done by volunteers, to whom many thanks.

Items highlighted for attention in the Quinquennial Inspection of 2022 have not been addressed yet as attention was focussed on bringing together the plans for refitting the church for use in the 21st Century, which is almost a quarter of the way through already.

Maintenance of the churchyard is still being carried out by a band of volunteers with various numbers turning out for the monthly Working Parties, or other times if the weather is inclement; our thanks to these people, as they save us, as a Church, a huge expense. The contractors have continued to clear the overgrowth in the fenced area and the part reclaimed has melded into the rest of the churchyard with mowing. Any work in the churchyard is funded from the Churchyard Fund, which now needs replenishing.

As Churchwardens we are trustees of three charities – the ecclesiastical Sarah Wood and Cudham School Trusts, along with the incumbent, and the parochial Thomas Stringer Trust, with two representatives appointed by the London Borough of Bromley. The 2 historic trusts are basically dormant, whilst the Cudham School Trust funds the maintenance of the old headmaster's house attached to Cudham School and enables us to provide supporting resources for Cudham CofE Primary School.

The Church Log Book and the Terrier and Inventory are available for inspection.

Diane Kemp and Mike Manthorpe

Downe Churchwarden Report

Churchwardens are responsible for the fabric and contents of the church, the maintenance of the churchyard and ensuring that services are offered and conducted in accordance with canon law.

It is difficult being the sole churchwarden and as I reported last year I am hugely grateful to Caryn Newell for her support and all she does in respect of the above as you can see from her buildings and churchyard report.

Our Curate Rev Rachel Archer left early in the year to take up the position of Rector of St Matthew and St James in Mossley Hill, Liverpool. We wished her and her family well in their new life with a special service and celebration lunch in our Village Hall.

Over the year we welcomed Kim Curle, Licensed Schools and Families Evangelist as she took a more active role in our church life.

I meet regularly with the vicar to discuss many aspects of day to day church life and would like to convey my thanks and gratitude to Barbara, our administrator for all that she does to help me with ongoing admin tasks.

The main things I wish to draw attention to are as follows:-

We have been in email contact and met with the Diocesan Architect, Paul Sharrock on several occasions this year on the ongoing feasibility of improvements to the Vestry and provision of a W.C. To that end a statement of significance and needs was completed to draw up provisional draft plans. We were provided with these late October for consideration. A meeting was arranged for the standing committee with the architect on 13th February 2024.

On Sunday 24th September the dedication of the new stained glass window took place, commissioned in memory of James Roe. The Archdeacon of Bromley and Bexley attended and preached.

On 28th September Caryn reported the boiler was shown to have a leaky valve needing the gas supply to be turned off. Parts were unavailable meaning a new boiler was required. This was subsequently replaced, and heating resumed early February 2024.

The Quinquennial Inspection was carried out on 3rd October and the subsequent report received on 14th December. Evaluation is ongoing.

I am saddened and concerned by the declining number attending our Sunday services but understand as many of our church family have health issues, but we are truly blessed to all who contribute their time and skills to ensure our church continues to be a friendly caring and welcoming church that brings honour to God.

I'm truly grateful to the flower arrangers, bell ringers, Hilary and Carol for our meditation group, to Kevin for playing the organ at our services, to John our Treasurer and of course to all our PCC members.

Chris Isbell

Downe Churchyard and Buildings

The fourth Quinquennial survey took place in October. The report was received December and this highlighted a number of areas where work is required:

- Urgent, requiring immediate attention:
 - Repair the high-level cast iron guttering to Tower
- Requires attention within 12 months:
 - Replace missing or slipped roof tiles
 - Clear vegetation from the gutter adjacent to north door
 - Clear valley gutter above the Vestry
 - Repair damaged rainwater goods
 - Clear ground gutter and gullies
- Requires attention within the next 12 – 24 months:
 - Kill and remove ivy from external walls
 - Repair stonework to the north buttress
 - Remove various self-seeded sycamores
 - Retest the electrical installation
- Requires attention within the quinquennial period:
 - Treat northern roof pitch with biocide and remove moss
 - Extend the downpipe serving the Tower
 - Redecorate external metalwork
 - Realine gutters to ensure that are no backfalls
 - Carry out limited repointing using lime-based materials

The saga of the gatepost, churchyard wall and fencing continued during 2023 without any resolution. With Councillor Jonathan Andrews help we have established a contact within Idverde and it is hoped that the repairs take place in 2024.

In September the new stained glass window was installed in the Church. The stained-glass window was commissioned by Dame Marion Roe DBE in memory of her husband James Kenneth Roe of Petleys to celebrate the village of Downe and its community's commitment to provide supportive 'Service' locally, nationally and internationally.

In September the gas boiler was serviced and found to have a faulty valve, so was leaking gas. Due to the age of the boiler (c40 years old) Stevensons were unable to source replacement parts and so we had no option but to look at a replacement. To comply with the C of E net zero target we looked at replacing the boiler with a 'greener' solution (air source pump, under pew heaters, etc) however none of these were deemed suitable for the church, given its age and the amount of usage. The only solution therefore was to install a new gas boiler; however, this required a faculty. Three quotes were sourced and in December a supplier was identified and approved by the PCC, together with the resolution to petition for a faculty. Just before Christmas the paperwork for the faculty was submitted to the Diocese, with the aim to have the new boiler installed in early 2024.

As part of the faculty, we needed to look at how we could reduce our carbon footprint and one of the areas highlighted was the lighting in the church. In November we invited CES Lighting & Electrical Specialists (CES) to review how we could convert our 13 year old sodium and halogen lighting

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system to a LED technology. They came up with a solution but at the moment the costs are prohibitive, so we will review again in 2024. In the meantime, CES have repaired 8 of the 10 uplights, 2 of the lamps were not repairable. They also replaced a faulty plug socket.

The following maintenance took place during the year:

- January - lightning conductor test
- April - tuning of the organ
- September – boiler service
- November – inspection/maintenance of the fire extinguishers

Caryn Newell

Messy Church 2023

Messy Church is a form of church for all ages that involves creativity, celebration and hospitality.

Messy Church met on 6 occasions during 2023:

- 16th February on the theme of Love and Lent at Downe.
- 7th April on the theme of Easter at Cudham.
- 30th May on the theme of Pentecost at Downe,
- 29th August, on the theme of New Beginnings at Cudham,
- 27th October, a Halloween Light Party at Downe,
- 29th December, on the theme of Christmas and Epiphany at Cudham.

Attendance varied during the year, with an average of around 27 children, parents/carers and helpers, of which the majority do not attend church on a regular basis. The most popular session was the Love and Lent occasion with 38 in attendance. We continue to have a core of regular attendees although there are usually one or two new families at each session. It is a delight to potentially be introducing them to a life with Jesus Christ.

Rev John Musson or Kim and John Curle led all age worship on each occasion, and it was marvellous to be able to offer an amazing buffet and refreshments at all these events once again, with the exception of Good Friday when hot cross buns and an Easter egg hunt were provided!

A donation box was made available, however, cash donations were small and did not cover the costs of the hall hire (at Downe) or craft materials. However, we hope to make available a card machine for donations in 2024.

The arts and crafts are prepared by myself and we have several regular helpers that help facilitate, talk with attendees or help with food and refreshments. An enormous thank you to Bridget Law and George, Karen Lockley, Kim and John Curle and Barbara Sheret, who all help on a regular basis as well as Mike Manthorpe, Kate Brignall, Sue Everest, Amelia and Ava Mackay, Alison, Luca and Gabes Tomeo who have given a hand too.

Denise Angell

Children's Parish Representative.

Sunday Club at Cudham

Sunday Club was held throughout the year, meeting most 2nd to 4th weeks of each month (except during the summer holiday break) with All Age Worship being held the first Sunday of each month. The average number of children that attended is about three, although sometimes we have had many more! The leaders have the experience to adapt the ideas for the children they have with them, whether it be one child or many.

Karen Lockley, Kim Curle and myself, have led the sessions. Kate Brignall and Bridget Law have continued to help. My thanks to all these people who plan, teach and deliver such fun and engaging material for the children. We are a helper short, so if you would like to find out more about this valuable and rewarding role then please do get in touch!

We have continued to use 'Roots' resource material, which enables the learning to be in line with that used for the adult service.

At Christmas, several children (joyfully including several from our local community that don't attend Sunday Club) performed the Bible Society's Instant Nativity: Festive Fred. This entailed some audience participation and once again proved to be great fun.

Denise Angell
Children's Parish Representative.

Electoral Rolls

April 2024 saw the yearly revision of the church electoral rolls at Cudham and Downe. Those listed on the rolls as members can participate in the governance of the church and can vote at Annual General Meetings. A copy of the privacy notice, which details how member's data is held by the church in keeping with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), is available on notice boards and the benefice website www.pcd.org.uk

Cudham - the roll still stands at 52 members of which 29 are residents and 23 are non-residents.
Barbara Sheret, Electoral Roll Officer

Downe – the roll is now 46, of which 32 are residents and 14 non-residents.

It should be noted that 2025 sees the complete revision of church electoral rolls.

Safeguarding

Last year we thanked Denise as she stepped down from the role as Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO). Downe resident Jo Rae Clark has agreed to become PSO and is the process of being safely recruited by Denise who still continues with this responsibility. We look forward to Jo taking on the role and reminding us of the importance of safeguarding compliance.

Deanery Synod

The Deanery Synod met four times in the 2023/24 period, in May at St Marks, Biggin Hill, in July at St Martin of Tours, Chelsfield, in September at St Francis of Assisi, Petts Wood, and in February at St Giles, Farnborough. I attended each of the meetings and reported from them to PCC members. Daren Kemp also came to the first three meetings, as a guest.

He was noticeably the youngest at the meeting in May, the new Synod seeming to comprise mostly of elderly, even old men! The sole purpose of this meeting was to meet with our new Archdeacon, Ven Allie Kerr. Having been introduced by the lay chair, Andy Goddard, Allie asked us to tell her about some of the good things, and some of the bad, which are happening in our Churches. I highlighted the formation of our Pastoral Care team in our Benefice and St Mary's Zoë Knight added the Warm Welcome events. Once they got going representatives highlighted quite a lot that was good, then it was time for the bad. There was a general murmur of assent when I said, "Numbers". Allie then told us about herself, her coming to faith and pathway to becoming Archdeacon of Bromley and Bexley.

The meeting in July was preceded by Communion, being the first 'normal' meeting of the new Synod. All officers (Lay Chair, Secretary and Treasurer) agreed to serve a further year. The guest speaker was Rev Canon Pamela Ive, Diocesan Director of Discernment and Vocations, who gave a Power Point presentation entitled 'Vocations'. The opening statement was, "We are called from our baptism to be disciples - a lifelong journey". Much can be summed up in a leaflet entitled "What's Your Calling", which was one of many in an envelope your Churchwardens had each received at their installation a month earlier. I set my envelope to work its way around all PCC members.

September's meeting saw Claire Boxall, Called Together Manager for the Diocese, speak on "How Green is my Church", embracing the move towards an Eco-Church and achieving Net Zero carbon by 2030, the stated aim of the Church of England. Eco-Church is an A Rocha (a Christian charity working to protect and restore the natural world) project, encouraging Churches to embrace the movement in every aspect of their lives - in worship and teaching, in the management of their buildings and land, in community and global engagement and in their whole lifestyle. At the end of the meeting the new Area Dean, Rev Neil Coleman, vicar of St Barnabas, Cray, was commissioned by Archdeacon Allie.

The focus of February's meeting was Safeguarding. The guest speaker was Emily Gillespie, Bromley's Safeguarding School Nurse, who has served in this capacity for around 10 years, dealing with children aged between 5 and 19. She was joined by her colleague Karen Harcombe, Specialist practitioner School Nurse and PSO at St Mary's, Green Street Green. Clearly Emily's work has a slightly different slant to that of Safeguarding officers in Churches and as I understood her the young people she encounters have been through several stages before meeting with her. Alarmingly she has dealt with 'hundreds' of referrals during her tenure. Safeguarding, though, is everyone's responsibility.

Just what is the purpose of a Deanery Synod? It is the link between us at local Church level and the higher echelons of the Church. If you want to find out what is or influence what could be going on in the Church of England then start by becoming our second Deanery Synod Representative!

Diane Kemp

Pastoral Visitors Team for Cudham and Downe

The Pastoral Visitors' team met on eight occasions during the year. The format of our meetings opens with prayer before dealing with the business detailed on the agenda. The agenda primarily includes an update on pastoral visits made since the previous meeting and records such visits or telephone contacts, with a note of any action required such as undertaking home communions for the housebound or other matters of pastoral concern. The confidential records fulfil a comprehensive account of the pastoral care provided for members of our two churches and members of the local community.

Other regular items on our meeting agendas include Safeguarding (Leadership and Domestic Abuse for example); arrangements for preparing and delivering Easter and Christmas gift bags to the housebound or lonely in our two parishes; and practical arrangements for the annual All Souls' services in Cudham and Downe churches.

A notable function has been supporting the regular Warm Welcome events either in Cudham Parish Hall or Downe Village Hall, a Holiday at Home in the Summer, and a Christmas Special in December – see separate Warm Welcome report.

We regularly arrange publicity by way of posters around the villages and write reports in both the Cudham Parish Magazine and the DowneTime Magazine, which provide information on our current pastoral care endeavours in our villages and maintain a reminder of our ongoing readiness to provide a listening ear, a shoulder to lean on or chat about a caring concern.

Spiritual care of older people is high on the agenda with two of our team commissioned as Anna Chaplains last summer by the Bishop of Rochester.

As a team, we undertake training, as and when suitable courses are available, and in 2024, plan to attend a Quiet Day at Crowhurst Christian Healing Centre, focusing on finding stillness in our heart amidst a busy, fast paced, and noisy world.

On Sunday 10th September Cudham Church hosted a Thank You Tea Party for volunteers in in our two parishes. This was well attended. Thanks to Ann Johnson for the idea and organising and for her oversight in co-ordinating the Pastoral Visitors' Team since it's conception.

John and Kim Curle
Anna Chaplains

Primary Schools' Work in Cudham and Downe

Together with Rev John Musson with whom we alternate on a weekly basis, John and I have opportunity to go into Cudham CofE Primary School on a Tuesday morning and Downe Primary School on a Thursday morning to take collective Worship with the children. We generally follow the Cudham Weekly Collective Worship themes, and often dovetail these with the Diocese of Canterbury Collective Worship Plans to provide an appropriate fifteen-minute session, then adjust accordingly for our session in Downe.

After introducing the theme for the day, and often with questions referring to the previous day's introductory session (especially at Cudham), we tell the set Bible story, through word, a short video clip or PowerPoint images to bring the story alive. The children are always keen to both ask and answer questions which greatly contribute to their understanding of the story. We end the session with a hymn or song from the wealth of lyrics available before a closing prayer and departure. We occasionally take our African instruments and teach an African song to add to the variety of the sessions. This pertinent to the exchange of correspondences between the children of Cudham School and pupils at The Stephen Jota Children's Centre in Uganda through the Nsumbi Trust.

Allied to the Collective Worship sessions with the children, we have prepared and delivered whole school special services for Christmas, Easter, end of school year and Harvest (with donations of food items from the school communities collected for the Bromley Borough Foodbank) which have been held in Cudham Church and Downe Church. These have provided opportunity for the children to show their enthusiasm through reading and leading prayers and, in Cudham School for us to work with the Worship Leads in planning, for example the Harvest Service in church. Cudham School's Easter service in church was more activity based with crafts in St Katherine's Chapel all part of the worship experience.

We were encouraged when a School Prayer Group was set up for parents and staff at Cudham Primary School at the end of 2023 with plans to meet in the staff room at 2.45pm on the second Thursday of each half term onwards.

At the School Leavers' services for both schools, pupils in Year 6 were presented with a copy of the Scripture Union *It's your move!* book offering advice and support for those moving up to secondary school.

Towards the end of the Summer term and as introduction to the staff development day before the commencement of the new school year, at the end of August, two sessions of Space to Breathe were offered to staff. We provide light breakfast refreshments, creative activities on a theme, space for fellowship, invitation to share any prayer requests, and a gift for teachers. Such project designed to enhance staff wellbeing and meet their spiritual needs.

We thank God for our church, school, community links and opportunities to respond to invitations to share in the life of each of the schools through our presence and witness. Please join us in praying for the headteachers and their staff, the pupils and their families, and an open door for us to continue taking the good news for which we count it an honour to engage in this special ministry to the primary schools in the parishes of Cudham and Downe,

Kim Curle
Schools and Families Evangelist

John Curle

'Warm Welcome' and other Events

The national Warm Welcome Campaign was originally launched in the Autumn of 2022 with the aim of helping to equip and support **free, warm, safe, and welcoming** spaces in communities across the United Kingdom. In support of this, **Warm Welcome** events under the banner of St Peter & St Paul's Church, Cudham and St Mary's Church, Downe, became a reality.

Our first event was held in Cudham Village Hall on Friday 3rd March and the second in Downe Village Hall on Friday 31st March. The plans developed in line with the basic requirements as a Warm Welcome Space, that they would be:

- free to enter into, ideally everything in it will be free
- warm and with hot drinks (+ in our case a hot meal)
- welcoming (+ in our case with some activities)
- safe for people of all ages

Our promotion for the events was primarily to people who might feel lonely or who would welcome being in a warm place, and who were generally those of more senior years, and for them to join with others in a day of fellowship and friendship arranged on each of the Fridays from 10.30am to 2.30pm.

A programme of social (board games and quizzes) and creative activities (crafts) were provided, with members of the churches' Pastoral Visitors' team in attendance to chat to guests. We are grateful to David Walker who provided a line-up of light entertainment over lunch.

On both occasions we were blessed by the generosity of the local Fayredo's catering company who provided the hot lunch – main course and pudding – and at no cost on both dates, hence, each event was able to be provided at NO COST to guests.

The two events were positively received, and we were encouraged by the numbers who came, thus providing the stimulus to try further events which we did by arranging a Holiday at Home at Cudham Parish Hall on Friday 28th July. The day's programme was similar to the earlier Warm Welcome events, the main difference being that we bought in basket meals from The George and Dragon, in Downe village, with guests being invited to make a suggested donation of £7 towards the expenses of the day.

The climax of the year was a Christmas Special at Cudham Parish Hall on 8th December with festive activities. Mince pies, biscuits and soft drinks were kindly donated by Tesco's Orpington and a magnificent Christmas dinner generously provided, again by Fayredo's. A highlight was the children's *Glee Club* from Cudham Primary School who joined us and sang a delightful programme of festive songs.

On each occasion we welcomed volunteers from the local community as well as the two churches to help set up, serve refreshments and the lunchtime meal, facilitate the crafts and in clearing up afterwards, and generally making everyone feel at home.

Financial support for expenses have been met through a successful bid from the Warm Space Grant Scheme at the Diocese of Rochester which awarded £600.00 to Cudham PCC.

We thank God for a successful end to our first 'warm space' year – a springboard, we pray, for the future.

Kim and John Curle
Anna Chaplains

Homegroup

Homegroup continued to meet on Wednesday evenings, with people from both churches attending. Most of the time we looked at the reading from the previous Sunday; during our sermon series from John Stott's radical discipleship book we focused on the study material from this. During Lent we started looking Pete Greig's lectio divina course, and we shall resume this soon - but as several members now find evenings difficult, we will be meeting at 2pm on Monday afternoons, thanking Sue for hosting us. We welcome anyone who wants to grow in their faith to come along.

Christian Meditation

A group of us meet on the first and third Thursday every month in the church at 10am. We listen to a CD of a short talk and meditate in silence for half an hour, using the method taught by John Main, an English Benedictine monk. Please see www.wccm.uk

You are very welcome to join us, even if you have not practised meditation before. We will show you how it is done!

Hilary Knight

Prayer Chain

We thank Pat Morbin for administering the Cudham and Downe prayer chain for the last few years and has now stood down. We are planning to set up a whatsapp group for prayer requests, with those not on whatsapp able to submit prayer requests via email/telephone. If you would like to join the whatsapp group, please send your details to Rev John.

Housekeeping at Cudham

Cleaning

Nothing has changed since my report last year. Very many thanks are due the two ladies who spend a considerable amount of their time cleaning in the church. Ann Johnson sees to the porch, the Nave and St Katherine's, from dusting the pews and wood-work, to washing the glass screen in the porch (is the handle not obvious enough?) and washing the entire floor area and Sue Nettlefold sees to the Chancel and the office. Either one of them will vacuum the passage by the stairs and clean around the kitchen and the WC if they have the time, and energy, but **a third person to join them would be desirable**, in order that these areas, plus the Upper Room and the West Vestry, be cleaned on a regular basis.

There is a particular problem with wax, especially in the Chancel, and it is some time since our church saw a proper **Spring Clean**; corners, nooks and crannies, plus cobwebs are evidence of this. Might we organise one, please?

Flowers

The Flower Team grew by one towards the end of the year with Emily Halifax somehow finding the time to help out. Kate Webb and Sharon Peake help when their demanding jobs and family commitments allow but Brenda Holbrook is my main helper. Thank you, all of you, for your time and skills.

One other thing I do is to meet with a bride and ideally her florist to talk through what they are planning as regards their flowers for the big day. Care of the furniture and fabric is not always obvious, apparently.

The cost of flowers continues to rise – there are fewer stems for the same money - and one might ask if they are really necessary, but the church does look so much more welcoming with the few arrangements and we are all very good at snipping and trimming, making the flowers last as many weeks as possible. As ever, if anyone could help on the odd occasion it would be appreciated.

Other Chores

I see to a myriad of other tasks week in week out, the day to day things such as one would do at home like putting out the rubbish, purchasing supplies, from coffee to bin bags, floor cleaner to port, ensuring there are loo rolls and hand towels in the WC. My thanks go to the others who help – Mark for the monthly testing of the emergency lights, Phil for minor repairs, Barbara for keeping the notice boards up to date, Norman for supplying the biscuits for our refreshments after services. All are unseen jobs until they are not done. Thank you everyone.

Diane Kemp

Flower Arranging at Downe

Seven ladies volunteer to arrange flowers in the church, and work in a rota. They all help at Easter, Harvest and Christmas. We are very grateful for their hard work.

The arrangements from Christmas 2022 were finally cleared from the church on Feb 4th for Candlemas. Lent began on Feb 22nd and no flowers were put in the church until Easter. However flower posies were made for Mothering Sunday on March 19th.

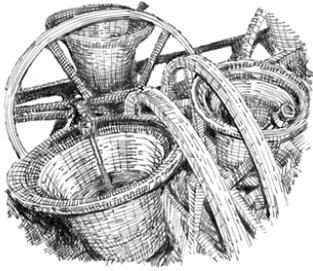
We helped with flowers for the May Queen Service on April 30th, then decorated regularly every weekend through the summer. The Harvest Service on September 24th was not held in the morning, but there was a large congregation for the dedication of the new window in the afternoon, and everyone appreciated the flowers and decorations then.

Christmas saw the usual festive decorations with Christmas Tree, Bows on the candelabra, crib, knitted nativity and candles, all ready for the Carol Service on December 17th.

If you could volunteer to help the flower ladies, men also welcome, please let me know, as none of us is getting any younger, in fact we NEED help! No previous experience necessary.

Hilary Knight

Cudham Bellringers



It has been another sad year as Paul Alexander died unexpectedly. A long standing ringer at both Cudham and Downe he is very much missed.

We continue to share practice nights with Downe and pool our ringers between the two towers. We are also grateful for the help of ringers from Sundridge, Bickley, Hever and Brasted and West Wickham who regularly help us out. We ring at Cudham on the first and third Monday, the second and fourth at Downe and we don't ring on any fifth Mondays or bank

holidays. Start time 7pm until 8:30pm.

We had 6 new ringers learning, although sadly two moved out of the area. The remaining four continue to make progress and some are now taking part in Sunday ringing.

We had a rope snap, and due to the long lead time from the ropemakers, we were unable to ring on more than the back six bells. Bickley tower kindly lent us an old rope to fit in the meantime which has put us back to full strength, although we anticipate that as one rope snapped, more will most likely follow. It took 7 months for the new rope to arrive, and it will be fitted in due course.

The Bell chamber is revolting. More wildlife than ever seems to have our spire as their habitat. Two long eared bats have been seen more than once, so it is likely that there are more in residence. There is evidence of bird nesting materials and currently the smell in the ringing chamber would indicate that there is decaying material that needs to be dealt with. The insect infestation made up of varying species make any maintenance a deeply unpleasant experience so there is a shortage of volunteers for this task. The insects now also inhabit the ringing room which also makes ringing at Cudham quite unpleasant.

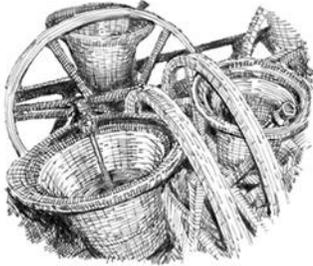
Despite this, we endeavour to ring for the first Sunday service of the month in both towers, where service patterns permit. We have noticed that there have been some changes in the service pattern at times which has meant that we haven't rung every month.

We rang for one wedding in July and hosted a visiting band in October.

Alison Wilson
Tower Captain

In Memoriam – Paul Alexander

Downe Bellringers



This year has continued much in the same vein as 2022, with practices being held weekly on Mondays with Cudham (1st and 3rd in Cudham, 2nd and 4th in Downe). We have also continued to ring for services on the 1st Sunday of the month (where applicable), in both Downe and Cudham.

Numbers are still low, so we are thankful for the support we receive from other Towers. We started the year with 6 learners, gained a new learner during the year but unfortunately lost 2 as they moved out of Downe. The good news is that the 5 remaining learners are making good progress and hopefully in 2024 we will be able to have them elected as full members of the KCACR.

The highlight of our year was ringing for the Kings Coronation. We were able to have all our learners ring in the band on the day (some with assistance), which was a massive achievement for them.

During the year we also rang for the following:

- Pam Townsend's memorial Service in February
- Easter Sunday
- Service of dedication for the new window in September
- Remembrance Sunday
- Carol Service
- Christmas morning

Once again, I would like to thank Alison Wilson for all her support, organisation and training. Also Jon Fry (Cudham) and Rob Hodgetts (Bickley) for their help in training the learners.

Caryn Newell
Downe Bell Ringers

The PCC's extends sincere and grateful thanks to all the church memberships who work so very hard to make our churches the worshipping, witnessing and welcoming community it is, and their help and support in so many ways throughout the year is greatly appreciated and valued.
Thank you everyone.