

St LAWRENCE CHOBHAM HANDBELL RINGERS

Our first major event of 2003 was the national handbell rally at York in April. Teams from around the country gave impressive performances, while we were all very gratified at the tumultuous applause the Chobham team received for our medley of selections from "*Les Miserables*". The summer was a time of change and sadness for us as Alan Collings, the founder of the team and its leader for 26 years, left the area to move to his retirement home in Sussex. He generously donated to us most of the music that we use, and the ancillary equipment (tables, stands etc.). We celebrated Alan's outstanding contribution with a special farewell party in June, including a bell concert in the church involving former and current team members.

We are extremely fortunate that Tim Willetts has both agreed to take over the musical direction of the team, and has allowed us to use the handbells that he recently acquired (we previously used the bells owned by Alan). Many of you will know Tim as the one who wielded the huge bass bells! If anyone would like to take those on as a challenge, I am sure Tim would like to hear from you, or indeed anyone who would be interested in joining the team.

We have continued our regular Friday evening rehearsals and are particularly grateful to St Lawrence Church for allowing us to use the hall, since Alan's departure. Our regular schedule of concerts, peaking in the run up to Christmas, has varied from large concert halls through a variety of churches to small retirement homes. We also participated in the South East Region "Stars and Stripes" rally. We now have our own website (<http://handbells.chobham.org/>) hosted on the village network (thanks to Nicholas Young) and we have released a new CD of Christmas music.

Looking forward to 2004, we have established a formal constitution and committee, we are hosting our own rally on Valentine's day for teams in the South East, and we shall be one of the UK teams attending the International Handbell Symposium in Toronto in August.

Steven Edwards, Chairman