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GREAT RINGING DAY

OUTSTANDING among England's bell-ringing festivals is Saffron Walden's Great Ringing Day, which has been kept up for over 300 years and will again be celebrated this year on Saturday, June 26. Bell-ringers from various other towns and villages, together with many overseas visitors, will attend.

The Saffron Walden Society of Bell-Changers, which claims to be the oldest society of its kind in the country, was founded just 325 years ago, after the death of a London merchant who had once lost his way while travelling through the woods around the town. He had found his bearings again only when he heard the church bells, and to show his gratitude left a legacy to provide local bell-ringers once a year with a day's holiday, a good supper, and half a guinea apiece. In addition, the successive vicars have ever since received two guineas annually to preach a special sermon on the anniversary of the benefactor's death, which became known as Great Ringing Day.