

Belfry Bat February 2022

Our peal attempt on February 2nd failed, but we rang a good quarter peal. In the evening, although three of our more experienced members were absent, we had a very useful practice for the ten who were there.

Many churches will be holding special services on February 6th to mark the 70th anniversary of the Queen's accession. I remember the day in 1952. At my primary school the head teacher was visited by one of the governors who told her that the King had died, and she announced the news to the assembled junior class. We decided to ring at 4 on Sunday, a time which would not mislead parishioners into thinking there was a service.

In the morning the ringing at Madeley was also dedicated to the jubilee – five of us. During the week I began work on the renovation of the Swynnerton wheels, which we hope will be finished in time for the bells to ring for Easter. Wednesday ringing on February 9th was at Little Eaton, and once again it was good practice rather than a completed peal. There were only seven at the practice in the evening, but we had a good ring.

There were eight at Sunday ringing on February 13th, including Mike Aspey from Codsall who rings with us when visiting friends in Newcastle. On Wednesday the rough weather kept some people at home, so the six who came to the practice were happy to finish early. Earlier in the day I was a member of a band which rang a quarter peal at St John's to mark the sixtieth anniversary of a peal which was the first peal for my friend Michael Wilshaw. The original band were all teenagers and we rang the peal as an eightieth birthday compliment to Geoffrey Davies who conducted the peal. Our peal attempt in the morning was unsuccessful.

On Friday February 18th we went to St Wulstan's at Wolstanton for the induction as parish priest of our friend Fr Michael Miners, formerly Catholic Chaplain at Keele. On February 22nd our Wednesday morning peal ringing group had a long-awaited success, which we hope will be the start of a revival. In the evening there were nine at St John's and we had a good practice.

On Saturday we had the long-awaited outing for the St John's band. I described it as *local and light*, three towers within easy reach of Keele with bells a bit lighter than we are used to. Finding a suitable date hadn't been straightforward, and not just because of covid. Avoiding half term, which occupied two weekends, Stoke City home matches and end of Keele term proved to be too difficult, and in the end half term was the loser. We began at Barlaston and then had a splendid lunch provided by Josie Martin. In the afternoon we rang at Whitmore and Woodlands followed by tea and cake. The aim of the day was to give our less experienced members practice on lighter bells, and they did very well. Thirteen ringers took part, nine from our own band, one from Betley, one from Newcastle and two from Madeley, all of whom ring at our practice from time to time. A good day, and over in time for me to watch the second half of the England-Wales rugby match.

Sunday mornings are always a bit of a rush, as we go to the 9.15 mass at Chesterton and find it quite hard to get to St John's by 10.30. We are looking forward to the re-instatement of the 11.15 service, which will give us a bit more ringing time. There were six of us in the belfry on February 27th, and we were pleased with our ringing.

Phil Gay