

Belfry Bat April 2022

The April meeting of the North Staffs Association was at Barton under Needwood, in the area I always call the Far East. The bells here are not easy to ring as there is a lot of frame movement and the fittings are antiquated. They have raised almost half of the £100k needed for a complete restoration. We didn't go to church on April 3rd as Ro was being careful in the run-up to her knee replacement operation scheduled for April 13th, but I did go ringing at Madeley and we rang five well.

On Tuesday Ro went to the eye clinic for laser treatment as a follow-up to her cataract operations, and the improvement was immediate. There was no ringing in the garage on Wednesday morning, and only six at St John's in the evening, so we had plenty of chat and an early finish.

On Friday I spent the morning working on the Swynnerton wheels – my contribution is now almost half done, and I did some more on Sunday. On Monday we had a visiting band to attempt a quarter peal at Woodlands. I had suggested this date because there are some restrictions on ringing at churches in Holy Week. Unfortunately the attempt was unsuccessful due to a handling mishap, a not uncommon occurrence when our bells are being rung by ringers not used to ringing them.

We had been all geared up for Rowena to have a knee replacement operation on Wednesday, but on Tuesday she had a phone call to tell her that it was cancelled because there were no theatre staff available. Covid strikes again! She was given a new date in May, so not long to wait. We don't practise in Holy Week, so Wednesday was a quiet day. Easter Sunday marked the return to normal service and ringing times. There were eight of us, and we made good use of the extra time.

On Wednesday April 20th our garage band rang a peal, and in the evening seven of us had a good practice at St John's. On Sunday eight of us rang well for the 11.15 service. Monday April 25th saw the start of the Madeley croquet season. Thirteen had declared themselves available to play, so I helped them get started and came home.

On Wednesday we didn't manage a peal in the garage, and there were seven at St John's in the evening. On Saturday I rang for a wedding at Norton in Hales, and then went to a meeting of the Chester Diocesan Guild at Nantwich. I didn't ring, as access to the ringing chamber is not easy – a spiral staircase at the end of the north transept followed by a walk along the gutter and another staircase. The meeting was partly to celebrate sixty years of ringing at Nantwich by David Allman, who has recently helped me saw up ash for stays.

Phil Gay