

## Belfry Bat June 2021

On June 2<sup>nd</sup> I went to Derbyshire for my first peal attempt since March 2020. My friend Paul Jopp has bells in his garage, but his is bigger than mine, as he has a ring of twelve. To avoid overcrowding we rang only six, which suited me as, like most ringers, I was seriously out of practice and was very tired by the end.

In the evening we held the first practice at St John's since lockdown, although not quite a normal one as we were limited to six in the belfry. We could have had a rota, with people sitting out in the churchyard, but decided it would be simpler to have just six there. We will do the same next week with a slightly different six. The builders came back on Thursday and made good progress with the interior, but the rendering of the external walls will have to wait until the week beginning June 14<sup>th</sup> as a consequence of the late arrival of the windows.

We rang six on June 6<sup>th</sup>, the first time all six had rung on a Sunday since March 2020. It was fine on Monday so we played croquet. We ran six again on Wednesday, and all of our Wednesday regulars have now been to a practice. On Wednesday morning I took the mobile belfry to have the trailer serviced. The Lfor Williams agent is based at Rudyard, and while the service was carried out we went to Rudyard Lake, which was busy with sailors and canoeists.

There was no service or ringing at St John's on June 14<sup>th</sup>, so I was able to ring at Madeley. We rang all six, but just before the end the tenor clapper fell out. It wasn't clear initially whether it had broken or fallen out in one piece, but some sort of remedial work will be required. It turned out to be broken, in the same place as we repaired a few years ago, which suggested that repeating that repair would not be worthwhile. An alternative which is being increasingly used, particularly for big bells, is to replace the wrought-iron shaft of the clapper with one made of timber, usually ash. After consulting the engineer who will do the job, we decided on an improved version of the previous repair, with a possibility of a wooden-shafted spare. We rang six again for the practice on June 16<sup>th</sup>, with rotation of personnel to keep everyone on board. Several people have told us how pleased they are to hear the bells again on Wednesday evenings.

The builders completed the inside of our extension on June 18<sup>th</sup>, so we can begin to use it. The rendering has still not been done. The announcement of the extension of restrictions means that the first two outings of the mobile belfry will not take place, but both are likely to be re-scheduled. Because of a misunderstanding, we rang only five on Sunday June 20<sup>th</sup>, but we were pleased with the way we rang. On Monday the rendering was started, and is likely to be finished by the end of the week. In the afternoon I played croquet, and had my first competitive game after mentoring newcomers for three weeks. I didn't win, but played well enough not to be disappointed.

I was in another garage peal attempt on Wednesday, but it was not successful. We were a bit more ambitious than last time, and our lack of practice showed. We had another good practice at St John's, still with limited numbers. No sign of the renderers on Friday, possibly because of the weather, but the day was not wasted. Our friend David Stott came to help me with the bookshelves under the window, which by the end of the day were complete apart from the panel at the back, which could only be bought once the rest was finished. The day ended with some very welcome rain.

On Saturday afternoon we were visited by fourteen of the Keele Women's Community Choir, who sang in our orchard. It was their first live meeting since lockdown. On Monday morning I was able to buy a sheet of plywood which was a very good match for the oak veneer of the bookshelves and in the afternoon we played croquet in spite of the drizzle.

Phil Gay