

Belfry Bat May 2021

We had another visit from Bernard Besly with his strimmer on May 2nd. He tidied up the area round our bluebell wood, which now looks beautiful. My nephew Adam phoned on May 4th and we arranged to visit him on May 21st. He and his partner Rachael have recently moved to a smallholding near Welshpool which they are planning to develop into a retreat centre.

We received more sad news on May 5th when we heard of the death of Sue Fraser who was a member of the Keele band from 1964 until 1978. She then gave up tower bell ringing, but more recently had joined the Alton Handbell Ringers. Also on that day we were visited by the electrician, and by lunchtime he had installed the lights and sockets and connected to the mains. Let there be light! On Saturday May 8th IKEA delivered the bookshelves. The website said they would deliver to any room, so they put them in the extension ready for assembly. Last time I bought a bookcase it was left downstairs and I had to carry it up piece by piece.

On May 12th our builder phoned to say he hoped to be able to deliver the windows in a weeks' time. Good news! We were due to play croquet for the first time on May 17th, but in the morning a poor weather forecast made me decide to cancel. As it turned out, the forecast was unnecessarily pessimistic and we could have played.

Cathy and Freddie Clitheroe paid us a visit on May 19th, the day for which the windows had been promised. But they didn't arrive, the excuse being that before painting they had been dismantled, and reassembly takes time. On Friday we visited Adam and Rachael, and were full of admiration for their property. It is a mediaeval timber framed house which has been doubled in size with modern timber extensions, sitting in a ten acre plot which is mostly woodland. Not a house I could live in now, but forty years ago it would have been very attractive but not affordable.

Sunday ringing on May 23rd was almost back to normal – we rang five bells for thirty minutes, and agreed to start practising on June 2nd. When we left I was very impressed by the number of cars in the car park.

Matt the builder texted on Monday May 24th to say he would be bringing the windows and window fitter at four, and the fitting would be done today. Good news! By mid morning the weather outlook had deteriorated sufficiently for me to take the difficult decision to cancel croquet again, correctly as it turned out. The windows arrived at 4.15 and were fitted by 6.30, so we now have a room with a view. The colour is a very good match for the existing windows, which is pleasing.

We went shopping as usual on Tuesday, but not quite as usual. Instead of giving us her list, Lindsay came with us, and this is likely to become our normal practice. Joiner Adam came on Friday, and was able to fit the window sills and the door. We were slightly disappointed that the glass in the door had vertical bars etched into it, but otherwise very pleasing.

On Friday I went, with five helpers, to erect the mobile belfry and check that it was in working order. Everything was fine, and we did a small amount of ringing to test it. We already have four bookings for this summer, which is pleasing but not enough to pay our overheads. The Staffordshire County Show, which is normally at the end of May, has been

re-arranged for August, and the Cheshire Show has a one-day version in July instead of June.

I played croquet for the first time since 2019 on Bank Holiday Monday. It was good to start again after two cancelled weeks. In the morning I cut grass in the orchard for the first time this year. It was quite hard work, as there has been a lot of growth recently. We no longer cut the whole area, most of which we allow to grow long with just a few paths of short grass.

Phil Gay