

Belfry Bat March 2022

On March 2nd the Wednesday peal band made it two in a row with a good six-bell peal. In the evening there were seven at the practice, which made it hard work. Another example of fitting everything in, as Ro went to the Ash Wednesday mass at Chesterton at six.

Saturday March 5th was the monthly meeting of the North Staffs Association, which was a special meeting to welcome newly elected members. These included Ben Crisp of the St John's band, and he and I went to Alton for an enjoyable afternoon. The bells at Alton are one of the best rings in North Staffordshire, currently an eight but about to be made into ten by the addition of two smaller bells. One of the benefits of the augmentation will be that the six smallest bells will be a diatonic six very good for training.

Rick Marshall told me some time ago that the Longton Probus Club was organising a visit to the Loughborough Bell Foundry and museum on March 28th, and early in the month there were still places available, so I circulated the St John's band to see who might be interested in going.

On March 9th our Wednesday band attempted a peal in memory of Margaret Jones, who died a year ago. She learned to ring at St John's in 1967 when a student at Keele and rang at Stafford for many years. Unfortunately we were unsuccessful, but I am in an attempt for a quarter peal at Stone on Saturday. Illness reduced the turnout in the evening to seven, which gave us a chance to practise things we wouldn't usually have time for.

On Saturday morning I rang in a quarter peal at Stone in memory of former St John's ringer Margaret Jones on the anniversary of her death, and in the afternoon there was a memorial service at Stafford at which I delivered a eulogy. The quarter peal was the first ringing I had done on ten bells for over two years.

On Sunday March 13th there were only five in the belfry, but we were pleased with our ringing. There was also good news that the resumption of normal services is planned for Easter Sunday. On Wednesday our peal attempt was again unsuccessful but we managed a quarter peal. We expected only six at the practice so decided to attempt a quarter peal, but only five turned up, and although we did try the quarter, we only got about half way.

On Saturday I went to Betley for a memorial meeting for David Becket, who died early in lockdown. David is best known for his work on Newcastle Borough Council, where he served a term as mayor, but he was also a ringer, and I conducted his only peal, at St John's in 1986. On Sunday I went to Madeley for the first time in several weeks. Most of the regulars were away, so I and David Midgley rang two. Ding dong is better than ding ding!

I had a sore shoulder on Wednesday March 23rd, so did not ring in the peal attempt, which was successful. There were six at St John's in the evening, but we rang only five on account of my shoulder. On Saturday morning I went to Nantwich where one of the ringers helped me saw up some ash logs into stays, for which I have quite a waiting list.

Monday March 28th was the date for our long-awaited visit to the Loughborough bell foundry. I had organised a group of nine, six of whom were ringers, which enabled the Longton Probus group to be big enough. We were given a conducted tour of the foundry, which I had visited several times but always find something new, and then let loose in the

museum. Unusually on Wednesday morning there was no ringing in the garage, but we had a good practice in the evening at St John's.

Phil Gay