

## TALES FROM THE TOWER

So did you hear the bells ring out on Tuesday evening? I tried to let as many people as possible know, via the Tavistock Times and Facebook pages, and even if you didn't see those, you should have heard us (if you live within earshot, that is). And with luck and a fair, following wind, you will hear us again on Sunday mornings from now on, as well as on Tuesday evenings, for practice.

After over a year away, apart from a few weeks last summer and some special occasions, some of us did feel we needed the practice. Not necessarily for our handling skills - like so many skills, it really is like riding a bike and you don't forget - nor even for our knowledge of method ringing and striking; but, for myself at least, the arm and shoulder muscles have got lazy. There really isn't much exercise, apart from swinging tins of baked beans about (something I keep meaning to do but never get around to) that can keep those muscles in trim. Only swimming, and we haven't been able to do much of that lately either.

So, although only six of us are currently allowed to ring at a time, and we can only be in the tower for 45 minutes, it was a fairly tentative beginning. But we managed some call changes, and a plain course each of Cambridge Surprise Minor and Stedman Doubles, so felt we had made a good start. And, because we have more than six ringers, we are now working to a rota so that all of us have a fair chance. (It will be my turn again on 30 May.)

Sadly, one of our number, Andy, is moving 'up-country' soon, so this and next Sunday are to be his final appearances. As one of our more accomplished ringers, he will be much missed. However, we took the opportunity to go indoors (*indoors!*) for a farewell drink with him. (And thank goodness we could, as it was pouring with rain - as usual - so would have been a rather hasty farewell and a much diluted drink if we had had to sit outside!) This means we have lost two ringers during the last year, as another of our most experienced ringers has decided to retire.

We do have those who began to learn before the pandemic swept everything aside, and thanks to Phil and his Zoom meetings and RingingRoom practices they have not only stayed, but have persevered and honed their mental skills. They will be equally glad to get back into the tower and regain their practical ability. But there is always room in a tower for more learners, of all ages. Not just yet, because of social distancing, but as soon as is possible we shall probably be encouraging new beginners.

Meanwhile, listen for the bells on Tuesdays and Sundays. They sound a little different at present but as soon as we are allowed to ring the whole ten, you may be sure we will be there. And with what joy the bells will peal out over Tavistock when that happens! I know they have been missed by the people of Tavistock, just as we the ringers have missed ringing them. It will be another step back to normality, and one that can include us all.

***Donna Baker***