

TALES FROM THE TOWER

So many people have commented on how good it is to hear the bells ringing again on Sunday mornings and for Tuesday evening practices, that it must seem a happy and optimistic return to normal life. It's especially good to be able to ring for weddings and other auspicious occasions too - always one of my favourite opportunities to help create the sound of what has been called 'the biggest musical instrument in the world'. What a privilege it has been for me, for seventy years now, to be able to take a rope in my hand and feel confident (well, more or less confident!) of being part of something that will give pleasure to people for miles around.

The most auspicious event of this last month has, of course, been the retirement of our Vicar, Chris Hardwick. Like every Vicar I can ever remember in St Eustachius, Chris has been a constant source of support and encouragement to us ringers, so it was sad to say goodbye and an occasion we felt warranted a special effort on our part. So for once, you will have heard the bells ringing after the service as well as before, and six ringers stayed long enough to ring a quarter peal of Grandsire Doubles, lasting just over 45 minutes. It seemed fitting that for once (the bells being not easy to hear within the church) the Vicar and congregation would actually hear the bells rung in celebration and thanks!

The return to full, normal ringing after the lifting of Covid restrictions is still, however, travelling a somewhat uneven and slightly rocky road. With not all of our ringers choosing to take vaccination, some of us feel unable to join them in a confined and poorly ventilated space, so must remain absent from many of the practices and service ringing, as well as weddings. This is rather sad for those of us not currently ringing for this reason; we miss our ringing and the companionship it brings. We can only hope that the situation will be resolved at some time, or at least a compromise reached, as for the ringing after the service for the Vicar when we split amicably into two teams.

However, the main thing is that the ringing should continue, and so give heart and pleasure to the many folk who hear it, both within the church and in the town and beyond. That is our task and one we all long to carry out whenever and for as long as possible,

Donna Baker