

St. Laurence Bell Ringers



Captain of Bell Ringers, Sandra Parker, entices us with her reflections. As Leslie Phillips said in 'Carry On Nurse', "Ding Dong!"

In this slender tower 8 bells are hung in two tiers; 5 on the top and 3 on the bottom. In 1954 the bells were augmented from 6 to 8. The oldest bells were cast in 1791 by Rudhalls in Gloucester, coming up to Bidford via the river. When 2 more bells were added 2 others of this ring were recast by Taylors of Loughborough, who also cast the extra bells. The lightest bell weighs just over 3 cwt and the heaviest, the tenor, is over 14cwt. In metric measure the bells range in weight from approximately 152 kilos to over 711 kilos.

As we ring our bells from the ground floor, we are visible to those who come into Church and often get an audience from those who have never seen bells rung before. Occasionally the odd photo is taken. One memorable practice was when a couple from Holland watched us. We spoke with them and made them welcome. At the end of the practice they thanked us very much for making their evening, even though they were not ringers. During the summer months our bells attract visitors to the Church who are often holidaying in

the area, or on canal boats. Ringing in the manner we do is unique to this country, but can be seen in other English-speaking countries.

Currently there are 12 ringers of various ages. At our practice night we are joined by ringers from other towers, which can make for a remarkably interesting practice. By pooling resources it enables us to expand our repertoire. Whilst visiting ringers attend our practice some of us attend other practices to help out or gain experience on different bells. The ringers at Bidford also ring for weddings held at Salford Priors. In 2019 there was a tower outing to South Worcestershire. A successful Skittles evening was held in February 2020. After ringing practice some will venture to the pub. During practice evenings, part way through, we may well stop for a drink and it has been known for cakes to appear.



With COVID19 bringing all Tower Bell ringing to a halt it became clear that we would not be able to ring our bells for some time. Our attention turned to the possibility of ringing hand bells instead. In July 2020 we started to practice with hand bells, initially outside but moving into Church as the light failed. This was something new to almost all and has proved to be fun. In addition it has helped our newer ringers to progress with learning method ringing, but unfortunately restrictions limit the number who can attend. Whenever the weather has allowed hand bells have been rung outside to welcome worshippers to the morning service just as we would have done on our tower bells.

November 20th, 2020