

THE PETERBOROUGH DIOCESAN GUILD OF CHURCH BELL RINGERS
RUTLAND BRANCH
Committee Report for 2020

The Tower Captains of Rutland have been fastidious in their application of Covid rules, and so bells have been rung between lockdowns in towers where the ringing chambers are large enough to allow for required distancing. The extra work that this has entailed, has been rewarded by so many positive comments from village and townspeople who have missed the bells, and were pleased to hear them heralding services once again. The chiming at Ketton has been augmented by some ringers distanced in the ringing chamber as usual, and another two ringing from the choir, one floor below. Whissendine reported: 'We had great support in our endeavours from Rev. Deborah Marsh. It was also really heart-warming that so many villagers told us how much they appreciated hearing the bells again over the summer months.' Even the tolling bell on Remembrance Sunday was noted in villages with comments of recognition.

Several towers tolled for VJ day: at Casterton, three bells were permissible, ringing call changes for 20 minutes and then tolling the three bells 25 times to commemorate 75 years. At Uppingham, a small number of weddings and funerals specifically requested bells; a few bells are better than no bells at all. The new band at Hambleton rang on four for services and the wedding of a ringer's daughter. Several towers tolled for Remembrance; one for an outdoor service. At the time of reporting, we are hoping to ring for Christmas services; indeed, the Ketton band is planning their usual hand-bell ringing before and during the Carol service, and tower bells to call villagers to the service. Somehow, they manage to do both, and only changing Covid restrictions will make this year different.

Learners began the year in earnest, but their plans to progress have been curtailed, of course. New ringers in Market Overton and Hambleton will resume when permitted, and there is additional incentive for the embryonic Preston team to prepare to ring their newly restored ring-of-six for the Patronal Festival next summer. This huge village project, raising funds and providing volunteers to support Taylors in the major restoration of the bells, did take place, and before-and-after photos of the bells and frame complete a booklet 'A Short History of Preston Church Bells, Rutland.' Free copies have been sent to every tower and school in the county. More are available from the branch. Learners rely on skilled teachers, and early in the year Alan Marks made light of the long journeys necessary to support learners at Wing and Hambleton at their weekly practices - and those learners range in age from pre-teens to established retirees! Whatever their age, Alan seems to inspire and give confidence in equal measure. Rutland thanks Alan Marks as these learners will boost our pool of ringers.

Last year, at the Guild AGM, Peggy Jennings received her certificate marking 50 years as a member of the guild, along with Roger Scholes from the Rutland branch. This year Peggy is celebrating 70 years of ringing. Many in the branch have benefitted from Peggy's gentle support and huge knowledge, as we try to make progress with new methods, or just enjoy an evening's ringing in her company. Read Peggy's ringing memoirs in the November Newsletter on www.rutlandbellringing.org.

Alan Wordie, Branch Chairman, wishes to mark the retirement of David Murcott. His full tribute can be found in the August Newsletter on www.rutlandbellringing.org. Alan refers to David's 34 year membership of the Guild, including 10 years as member of the Cathedral Company, and his ever helpful contribution to conducting, teaching, bell projects and general encouragement throughout the Rutland Branch. He ends by thanking David and Glenys for all they have done in support of bell-ringing in Rutland and hope although the ropes may have been "hung up on the spider" they will feel welcomed at Branch social events.

Throughout the long periods without ringing, we have been entertained and educated by Helen Allton's regular updates - much of which has been included in Sue's monthly newsletters, which continue to be circulated very close to the first of each month. Our thanks to both Sues for keeping our interest alive in both Guild and Branch matters.