



Editor's Foreword – Andy Clark

Well what a year! Certainly not the year I or anyone else could have expected. In ringing terms, I've been lucky to be able to continue ringing over the last 12 months either on a mini ring or on Ringing Room, so one way or other, my ringing brain has still been ticking over. Although with that said, at a recent Ringing Room practice, it took almost all of the starting rounds for me to remember how my bell would start in Grandsire Triples. Thanks again to all those who have provided articles over the last year, and please keep them coming! Best wishes for 2021.

Ringing Master's Report – Arthur Reeves

It was at the Guild AGM in 2015 where I was first elected to be Ringing Master. Had I stood up and described to you what things would be like six years later, I doubt many of you would have believed me. Clearly, the last year has been a challenge and the negatives far outweigh the positives. Yet I am proud of the manner in which Guild members have come together; how so many of you have embraced change, supported one another and been resilient in the face of uncertainty. In spite of the physical distancing present during much of the year, many of you have participated in the ongoing Guild talks. Since March, we have hosted 46 online talks covering a very broad range of topics. The vast majority of these have been recorded, meaning you now have access to an excellent and extensive range of training material. Online sessions mean that members from across the country, and indeed World, can participate. Furthermore, the Guild now has a thriving Youtube channel stacked with a library of training resources and archived material free for use. Nine months ago, few of us had even heard of Zoom, yet Guild members rapidly and enthusiastically put their talks and training sessions together.

We will be looking to continue these online talks in the first quarter of 2021. See the programme of talks already in place in the table on the next page. If you haven't seen this resource yet, do take a look here: <http://www.stmartinsguild.org/teaching/training-and-resources/>

As time has progressed through the year, Guild members have led handbell sessions and Ringing Room sessions. Particular thanks to Janet Horton and Phil Ramsbottom for leading on these, and to all those who have supported and participated. Simon Linford has continued to keep Brumdingers enthusiastic in ringing, ready to re-group as soon as guidelines suggest this is appropriate. Jonathan Townsend has advised and guided us on appropriate risk assessments. Trish Everett has ensured many of us have been able to complete our Leadership in Safeguarding training. Clare McArdle and Tracy Stevens have brought us together with a treasure hunt and Guild Bake-Off, raising over £1,000 for charity, and amusing us with their videos. Stella Tew, along with so much more, has co-ordinated communication, our first ever online meetings and supported an increasing membership. Gill and Richard Postill, along with Michael, Vicky and Elizabeth Wilby, led our photographic competition. Mark Eccleston has drastically revamped our website to ensure it can cope with the new resources we were regularly now uploading and to make it much more accessible. Despite thinking he'd struggle for material, Andy Clark has co-ordinated and organised superb material for our quarterly newsletters. 46 individuals have carefully planned and diligently delivered a training session.

There is always a risk when you begin naming individuals that you may forget somebody and I know many more people have contributed to our Guild over the year through their support, encouragement and participation. When I became Guild Ringing Master, I commented that I would approach the role as a ringing co-ordinator; facilitating and encouraging others to contribute. I truly believe we are only as strong as the collective contribution of our members; in other words, as you. As my description in the above paragraph demonstrates, the success of our Guild over the last year has depended on so many others.



And as I look back over the last six years, the same rings true. So many individuals have given up their time to support others, lead on initiatives and contribute to the wider success of our Guild. I am extremely grateful for all of the support given to me during my tenure as Ringing Master. I will mention one individual whose contribution, I think, needs highlighting. He won't know it, but Phil Ramsbottom has been, unofficially, acting like my deputy since 2015. Back then, Phil offered to organise and run a series of practices and he hasn't stopped since. Phil's enthusiasm and willingness to 'get on and do' is exactly the support I've relied on.

I stand down from this post at an interesting juncture for the Guild. 2021 is, I truly hope, going to be a year of optimism. Yet I am conscious of the challenges ahead; for our Guild and ringing in general. But I do think we can be positive. Guild officers and members have demonstrated the characteristics which will drive success: resilience, flexibility, cheerfulness, determination, to name but a few. With your continued support, ringing across the Guild can return as strong as ever.

On behalf of all of the officers, thank you for your support across 2020. On my own behalf, thank you for the last six years. I will look forward to supporting my successor in whatever way I can.

Upcoming online sessions (Wednesdays @ 19:00 unless otherwise stated)	
13 th January	Managing ringing restoration projects with Sue McClaughry, winner of the Westley Award
20 th January	The bells of Taylors, with Chris Pickford
26 th January (Tuesday)	Bell ringing and Maths, with Mark Davies
3 rd February	Bell-Tower Dynamic Motion: Latest Research with Gordon Breeze
10 th February	The story of ladies' peals, with Linda Garton
24 th February	TBC
3 rd March	War and Covid - A 'Long View' of restrictions on Ringing with Robert Wellen
10 th March	Exercises to support us back into ringing, with Lucy Gwynne

Ringing Zoom – Phil Ramsbottom

The Tuesday / Friday Ringing Room sessions have been continuing and despite sometimes being very low on numbers, they've always been beneficial and a good laugh.

Here are some things I've learnt in recent weeks:

- When conducting Stedman Doubles and calling singles at random (which is about the best I can manage) it helps if one can keep an eye out for when it comes round. Doing these two things at the same time I have come to realise is way beyond my skill set!
- Having just instructed the band that Morning Exercise is Cambridge below the treble and Oxford Treble Bob over the treble, it greatly helps in the progress of ringing the method if I myself can remember what I've just been telling everyone else.
- Finally, when any ringing grinds to a halt (as it sometimes does on Ringing Room), before calling 'stand', it's always worth allowing about five minutes of deathly silence in the vain hope that someone will realise it's them for whom we're all waiting and thus the ringing just might restart off its own bat. It hasn't happened yet but I live in hope.



Phil asked for those who attend these sessions to provide some of their own reflections, so here goes.

Richard Andrew writes:

Back in September I received an email out of the blue from Phil Ramsbottom sounding me out that perhaps I might be able to join a Ringing Room session he was organising for later that week. I must admit that I was quite keen to give this a try, especially as I had not done ringing of any sort since March, although I was a bit concerned as to how I would find things in Ringing Room. In the event, although it took a few sessions to get used to the environment and disciplines involved in using Ringing Room, I have found the twice weekly sessions very enjoyable and good fun, and they have helped to keep Doubles and Minor methods ticking over in the old brain!

As one needs to join a Zoom session as well in order to take part, I have been a bit hampered as my home PC doesn't have a camera or microphone, so I communicate with the others by using the 'Chat' facility in Zoom. This means that while I can see and hear the others, they can only see my comments in 'Chat'. However, this has in fact added an extra dimension at times, as it is quite fun to type in a humorous comment and just watch it slowly erupt on the faces of the assembled company! A case in point was when we had several goes at trying to ring Morning Exercise Minor, also known as 'Boat Race' as it is Oxford TB above the treble and Cambridge below. After another attempt to ring this collapsed in a heap I typed in 'Another sinking!' and just watched the amused faces!

There are also some other potential hazards in using Ringing Room, as I normally use the 'J' key to ring my assigned bell, but have sometimes inadvertently hit the 'H' key next to it by mistake, which then produces an unexpected 'That's All' in the middle of the ringing – sorry Phil! I think I'm getting better at avoiding it now. We do manage to complete some touches successfully, which is really rewarding, although there is also the odd technical issue which can occur on people's internet connections, which can throw an unexpected spanner in the works!

I feel I have really benefited from these twice weekly sessions and they have also been good fun, so thanks to Phil for organising them. I'd recommend it to anyone else who might be interested in giving it a go.

Keith Whitehead writes:

Heard on Ringing Room but not up the tower:

- 'All of you have frozen'
- 'My bell isn't sounding'
- 'I've frozen'
- 'I did ring in the right place but you all heard me in the wrong place'
- 'Just ring twice quickly to get back on the right stroke'

and my personal favourite (because it did actually happen to me):

- 'An invitation to update my computer has just popped up and obscured all the bells'

Finally, an anonymous contributor writes:


If you get lost in Ringing Room, just blame your computer, or the internet, or your broadband lag and no-one will notice!

For up to date information and latest calendar use the website <http://www.stmartinsguild.org/>



The 100 Club – Clare McArdle

Please see the table for the Q4 results and the Christmas Draw. Well done to the winners and thanks to all for participating!

October	1 st	17	Phil Sealy	£50
	2 nd	94	Jane Chapman	£15
	3 rd	44	Triona Jowett	£5
November	1 st	23	Richard Lewis	£50
	2 nd	47	Graham Kelly	£15
	3 rd	77	Margaret Burling	£5
December	1 st	48	Olly Bouckley	£50
	2 nd	40	Stephen Shipley	£15
	3 rd	9	Stephanie Warboys	£5
 Christmas Draw	1 st	16	Alex Ross	£95.92
	2 nd (two winners)	18 92	Margaret Burling Oliver Bouckley	£47.96
	3 rd (four winners)	6 86 43 4	Janet Horton Angie Wakefield Rowena Shipley David Flint	£11.99

I am pleased to be able to report that £1,416.35 was transferred to the BRF at the end of 2020.

St Martin's Guild Subscriptions – Tracy Stevens

Subscriptions are now due please for 2021 please.

Internet banking details for payment are below:

Bank: Lloyds
Sort Code: 30-97-77
Account Number: 00014057
Ref: Your surname

Full members pay £10 per year. Over 65s & Students in full time education pay a £5 concessionary rate per year. Finally, associate membership fee is a one off payment of £10 (£5).

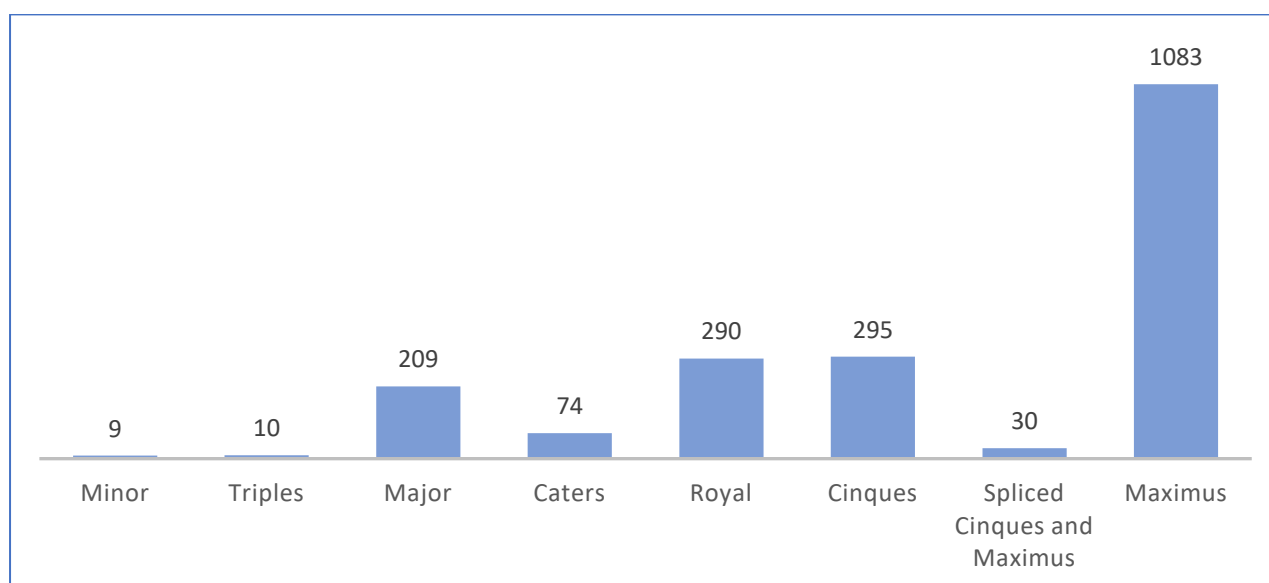


The 2,000th Peal at Birmingham Cathedral – Mark Eccleston

The 2,000th tower-bell peal at Birmingham Cathedral was rung on 17th June 2019. St Philip's is the third location, second church, but first Cathedral to reach this milestone: the other locations being Loughborough Bell Foundry and Meldreth. A good peal of Bristol Maximus was scored; the band drawn from some of the ringers who have rung the most peals on the bells in recent decades. The peal comprised ringers who between them had rung 2,748 peals on the bells with Rick Shallcross taking prime position as the head of the band having rung his first peal on the bells in 1964. A peal of Stedman Caters, rung at St Paul's on the same evening, enabled other Monday night regulars to be included, the Cathedral band being oversubscribed with deserving cases.

1,439 different ringers have taken part in the first 2,000 peals on the bells and whilst new additions to the band are always welcome, the weekly peal attempts have retained a core of experienced ringers over many decades. 50 ringers have now each rung over 100 peals on the bells, many of them retaining a somewhat static position in the circle. This categorisation, when applied in a constructive way, can provide reassuring stability within a peal. Individuals can develop an intimate knowledge of a particular bell, enabling them to concentrate on lifting the performance of the wider band instead of focusing on any arbitrary personal targets such as circling the tower. Although a similar approach is adopted in other ringing centres, Birmingham appears to have taken this categorisation to the extreme as demonstrated by Peter Border's phenomenal total of 523 peals on the 31cwt tenor. This bell is challenging to ring well and Peter's total is every bit as remarkable as his many other celebrated heavy bell performances.

Peals rung at each stage (at 17th June 2019)



It is perhaps unsurprising therefore that only 40 ringers have circled the 12 to peals, the first being George Fearn in 1960. Only three women have circled the tower: Fran Dodds in 1984, Julia Cater in 1991 and Sue Marshall in 2009. The quickest to circle the tower is Paul Needham who took just over 12 months, whilst the slowest is David Brown who took just over 44 years. Only three ringers have circled the tower as conductor: Peter Border, Rod Pipe and Michael Wilby. The only women to feature on the list of conductors are Fran Dodds with 12 peals, and Eleanor Linford, Stephanie Pattenden, Muriel Reay, Stephanie Warboys and June Wells on one peal each. Something for local peal organisers and the Women in Ringing working group to mull over perhaps?



The 2,000th tower-bell peal at Birmingham Cathedral: Bristol Surprise Maximus, rung on 17th June 2019.

Band (clockwise from front right): Stephanie Warboys, Mark Eccleston, David Hull (C), David Pipe, Rick Shallcross, Paul Needham, Dickon Love, Paul Bibilo, Jonathan Healy, Simon Linford, Tom Griffiths, Michael Wilby

<p>Birmingham, West Midlands Cathedral Church of St Philip Monday, 17 June 2019 in 3h 23 (31–0–21 in D)</p> <p>5040 Bristol Surprise Maximus Composed by R W Pipe</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Stephanie J Warboys 2 Mark R Eccleston 3 David G Hull (C) 4 David J Pipe 5 Frederick Shallcross 6 Paul Needham 7 Dickon R Love 8 Paul E Bibilo 9 Jonathan P Healy 10 Simon J L Linford 11 Thomas W Griffiths 12 Michael P A Wilby <p>100th peal of Bristol S Maximus: 10. The 2,000th tower-bell peal in the tower. Maurice Edwards is associated with this peal, having to stand down due to incapacity.</p>	<p>Birmingham, West Midlands St Paul Monday, 17 June 2019 in 2h 50 (12–2–13 in F#)</p> <p>5004 Stedman Caters Composed by M R Eccleston</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Jack E Page (C) 2 Alistair J Cherry 3 Luke G Groom 4 John H Fielden 5 Jack P Gunning 6 Paul McNutt 7 Jonathan B Townsend 8 Paul Jopp 9 James P Ramsbottom 10 Gordon R Birks <p>A peal rung in anticipation of the 2,000th peal at the Cathedral Church of St Philip, Birmingham by members of the Monday night band. With thanks to Bill Haynes for dropping out after accidentally meeting 11.</p>
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The 133rd Henry Johnson Commemoration – Jenny Sunter (*Dinner Secretary*)

While COVID has stopped all play on ringing association dinners across the country, some Guilds, including St Martin's, have moved into virtual territory to preserve anniversaries.

The 133rd Henry Johnson Commemoration will therefore be celebrated with an event on Saturday 27th February 2021, through the magic of Zoom. This is the date as originally scheduled, so it should be in your calendars already!

The online event will be much shorter than our usual celebration, with an 8pm start and lasting approximately 45 minutes, but it will be a blend of light entertainment, history and handbells, not to mention another opportunity to see friends, albeit in their little video boxes. The event will also serve as a marker for when we can hopefully hold the dinner 'proper' in 2022.


While we cannot have our dinner served in a grand location, we can offer the opportunity to share the same menu at home. Picking up on other similar events, please see an optional three course menu below. While I have not provided recipes, I think you will easily be able to find these, or similar, on the internet or in well-thumbed recipe books. In the case of the soups, I believe both options come in a can!

So whether you want to push the boat out with best bib and tucker and fine home dining, or you would rather be in your pyjamas with a tub of popcorn, we hope that you will join us for the commemorative occasion and the important toast to Henry Johnson.

To book please follow the link below to the eventbrite booking page:

<https://bit.ly/3rUq4Pb>

Bon appétit!

Menu Suggestion	
	
Starter	French Onion Soup or Broccoli and Stilton Soup
Main Course	Cod or chicken wrapped in pancetta, served with French green beans and roasted tomatoes Vegan option of stuffed field mushrooms
Dessert	Fruit Crumble of your choice, served with custard, cream or ice cream! Or cheese board favourite!
Followed by:	Coffee or tea with mint chocolates



St Martin's Guild in the Snow – *Richard Andrew*

Thanks to Richard Andrew for providing these seasonal images of Shirley and Knowle back in 2010.





More St Martin's Guild in the Snow – Richard Postill

On a similar note, thanks also to another resident photographer, Richard Postill, for providing this image of Birmingham Cathedral, taken in 2013.



A Trip to Loughborough – Simon Linford

The Brumdingers had a very special trip to Loughborough Bellfoundry arranged for them. It was at a time when the Museum was shut but needed a group of young visitors to test their COVID-safe measures prior to re-opening to the public. Having previously helped the Museum come up with ideas for how to redesign the new Museum (with the benefit of the grant from the National Heritage Lottery Fund that has now been awarded), this was a way for the Museum to say thank you and provide a fantastic opportunity for the young ringers and their families.



All of the wider Brumdinger group and parents went, with the group carefully split and organised so that some would do a treasure hunt in the Museum while others would have a ring on the bells. The Bellfoundry laid on lunch for them all and fired up the furnaces to demonstrate a small bell being cast. All in all it was a brilliant morning, enjoyed by all.

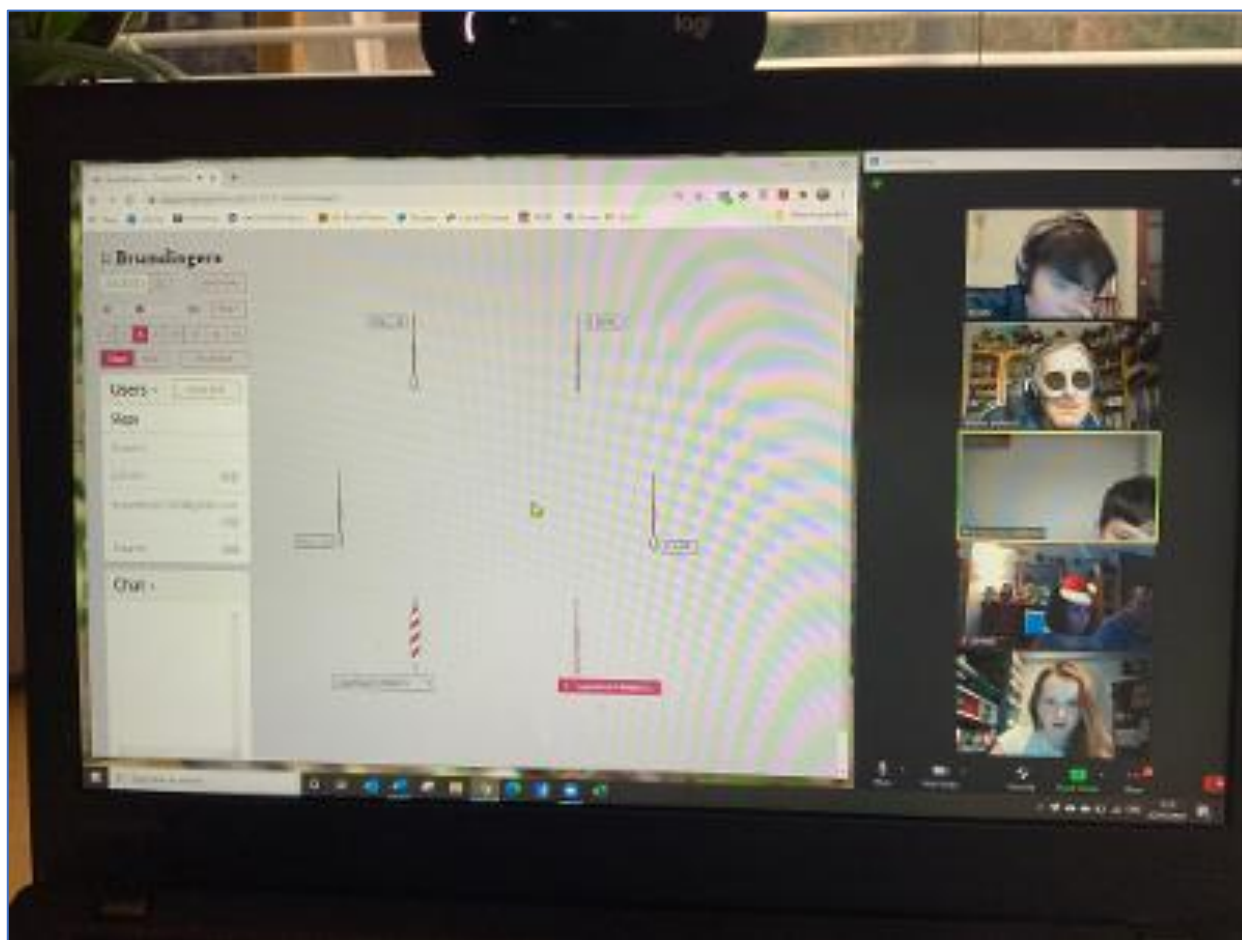


Brumdingers – *Simon Linford*

Some of our youngest bellringers have continued to meet regularly on Saturday morning in Ringing Room. Thomas, Matthew, Elizabeth and Susan enjoy a variety of activities, always with a great display of hats, sunglasses, or whatever can be found in the ever-expanding joy of Zoom's video filters. The introduction of the 16-bell tower expanding the repertoire and the challenge of ringing four bells each! Matthew has become expert at calling call changes on all numbers while Thomas has now progressed onto Bob Minor on the trebles (we have not really bothered ringing one bell each). Elizabeth is ringing Bob Minor on different pairs, as well as Bastow. Susan teaches herself methods on Abel and enjoys ringing pairs in Grandsire.

The older Brumdingers have got a bit tired of Ringing Room - too much of the rest of their lives is on screen. Orson, Susan and Charlie ring on Thursday evenings, and we were ringing handbells out in St Mary's churchyard until it got too cold and dark. The final outdoor practice brought out the carol music and a passable attempt at Silent Night with Caoimhe, Cian, Charlie, Susan, and Elliot illuminated by head torches!

We were looking forward to being able to ring on real bells on Thursday evenings again, taking advantage of the new Central Council guidance for supervised children's activities in out of school settings. When this was published it enabled children's ringing in Tiers 1, 2 and 3, but unfortunately they will have to wait until restrictions get lifted somewhat.





Christmas ringing at St Paul's – Richard Grimmett

Christmas 2020 has to be put into the context of the COVID pandemic.

The band has taken every allowable opportunity to ring during the pandemic. Our new Vicar, Revd David Tomlinson, is extremely supportive of our ringing and impressed by our lively and friendly band. After many years of decline the congregation is now reviving and includes members of the Farsi community, exiled from Iraq and Iran, who have made St Paul's their spiritual home. The congregation is very appreciative of our ringing, and once the pandemic is over, we will start to teach many of them (in particular the Farsi) to ring.

Earlier in the year we found ringing odd combinations of bells from the full ring unsatisfactory, and made internal alterations to allow some of the bells to be rung from the schoolroom below. We could then increase the number of ringers beyond the '6' we had become accustomed to (as we now had two venues), and ring all ten bells if we so chose. Before Christmas we successfully negotiated this arrangement on many Sundays and had rung rounds on the full 10, and methods on 6 and 8. The treble, 2nd, 3rd, 5th, 7th and 9th are now rung from the ringing chamber whilst the 4th, 6th, 8th and tenor are rung from the schoolroom.

Sunday tower bell ringing had to stop when we entered Tier 3, but we continued ringing handbells in the churchyard on Sundays, always observing the necessary social distancing rules whilst enjoying our takeaway coffees. We received many compliments from Jewellery Quarter residents, who said they found it very comforting to sit in the churchyard and listen to our ringing. Some of our single ringers have also said how important they have found these meetings to ring tower bells and handbells, as it has provided a much welcome break from working and living at home alone, allowing them to have some precious social interaction. Our ringing has also served as a place of continuity for three student ringers who left their homes for the first time to study at University in Birmingham in September.

This year we rang on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Our most recently elected member of the band, Elizabeth Wilby, rang in the first touch on both days. These touches were rounds and call changes on the front 6, with four ringers above and two below. Both touches were followed by extents of Grandsire and Stedman Doubles on the back six, with three ringers in each room.

Leaving the tower was a sad experience, knowing it would be some time before ringing is permitted again. We have found solace from knowing handbell ringing may become possible a little sooner. Whilst it has been wonderful to perform a service within the community which has been noticed and appreciated, it has not been the ringing that has brought us together but the camaraderie of the ringers. The St Paul's band meets fortnightly for online quizzes via Zoom, and has held its AGM, Annual Dinner and Christmas Party using the same technology, but it cannot adequately replace meeting face to face, especially in a time when one needs one's friends.



Putting new 'lockdown' skills to the test... *Clare McArdle*

On Friday 16th October, I received the following message, forwarded to me by Simon Linford:

Hi,

I wondered if you might be able to help?

My good friend has just this week finished her cancer treatment and it is also her birthday on Monday the 19th. I would love to be with her to congratulate her (I live in London) but with the current situation can't be.

When you finish cancer treatment you 'ring the bell' to mark the end of chemo. I would love to be able to give her an uplifting hand bell peal (I had one for my wedding day and it's such a wonderful way to celebrate) on her doorstep on Monday... would you know any groups that might be willing to take on the commission, I would pay of course. She lives on Station Road near Harborne.

Thanks and sorry for the last minute nature!

After a few minutes of panic, I started to think practically about this and sent out a couple of emails. I was then able to reply:

Hi,

What a lovely idea. I have managed to find two others to join me to ring on your friend's doorstep. We will ring a short burst of 'Plain Bob Minor' on six bells.

Here's how I think it could work. Would you like to FaceTime your friend at an agreed time and after five minutes or so, we will ring the door bell and ring for her.

We can be available between 5.30 and 6.30 on Monday and it will literally take only a few minutes, then we can wish her happy birthday and congratulate her on completing her treatment on your behalf.

If you're happy with these arrangements please could you let me know your friend's name and her address.

And that is what we did. Thank you to Mark Eccleston and Janet Horton for joining me. Half an hour after I got back, I received this email:

Thank you Thank you!

Kate loved it – her words were:

'OMG Vicky that's the most beautiful thing anyone's ever done for me, I'm speechless (actually am).... in total pieces...  ...I'll never forget this birthday'

Thank you for taking our love to her and some much needed joy xxx

We refused any payment, but suggested that Vicky made a donation to a charity of her choice.

A year ago, neither Janet nor I could ring handbells, but both of us had taught ourselves during lockdown. Janet ringing minimus with Rose and me on my own with Mobil – a necessity if I was going to stay one step ahead of the Brumdingers and be useful. If this act of kindness is the only thing I achieve from learning to ring handbells, it is already enough.

For up to date information and latest calendar use the website <http://www.stmartinsguild.org/>



Reflecting on 2020 – Clare McArdle

Almost a year has passed since I was elected Master of the St Martin's Guild. It has been a year like no other in living memory as far as ringing is concerned and I would like to pay tribute to Guild members and my fellow officers for the ways in which they have risen to the many different challenges that 2020 brought.

As life as we knew it ground to a halt in late March, I don't think anyone was predicting such a prolonged period without ringing returning to normal. In March and April, as the Standing Committee met for the first time virtually, our immediate concerns were for the health and welfare of members, some of whom we knew would be classified as vulnerable. Our next concerns were around how we could function as a Guild when our primary activity was no longer viable.

As Master, I am proud to be able to say that the Guild – both its officers and its members – has risen to the challenges admirably. Our number one concern, to support vulnerable members, was dealt a sobering blow right at the beginning of the first Lockdown with the hospitalisation of Andrew Stubbs before we had been able to make contact with him. We did make contact and were able to put him in touch with close friends in his last few days in hospital, but his death was a shock. Fortunately, we were able to support other vulnerable Guild members and I am very grateful to all those members who supported ringers from their own towers in any way, keeping them safe.

As to the question of how to continue to function as a Guild, we very quickly embarked on an ambitious plan of Zoom webinars, initially twice weekly until the summer break and then weekly. Incredibly, we have been able to sustain this throughout the year and already have a programme that takes us through to the end of March. Our series of webinars has gained momentum during the year and recognition of excellence in many quarters. With the revamping of our website and the addition of the Resources page, access to the webinars is truly without boundaries, something of which we should be justifiably proud. In addition, we have been able to facilitate necessary Safeguarding Training in partnership with the Birmingham Diocese.

We have hosted other imaginative guild events during the year – the 'Bake-Off' competition, with an amazing 50 entries and an incredible £1,300 raised for charity; the photographic competition, again well supported; and the treasure trail.

Guild meetings have been better attended on Zoom than they would have been normally, something that we will certainly be looking to carry forward in the future.

I have been incredibly fortunate as Master to have a brilliant team of officers around me. I would like to pay tribute to their efforts supporting members and finding ways to continue the business of the Guild. Not only that, they have risen to new challenges and found new ways of doing things. Thank you Arthur (Guild Ringing Master), Stella (Secretary), Tracy (Treasurer), Mark (Webmaster and Archivist), Trish (Safeguarding Officer).

Lastly, I would like to say thank you to everyone for making the best of 2020 and for making it better for others.