



Team T-shirts at Adlington

At 10am on Saturday 6th May 2023, the ringing room at St Paul's Adlington in Lancashire was filled with seven Ring for the King recruits and thirteen other ringers and friends, all clad in matching T-shirts.

"Look to, treble's going" marked the start of an hour of ringing and the satisfying result for our new ringers of many hours of dedication, enthusiasm, highs and some lows, not to mention a sticking plaster or two, to reach this stage. If anyone had told me, as we came out of lockdown, that we would be able to take a team photo of 20 ringers as we rang for the coronation, I would have laughed at them.

Things could have been very different. For many years, the ringing at St Paul's had been in the hands of the McNutt family – Alan, Audrey and their sons Paul and Ian. Paul and Ian moved out of the area and Alan sadly passed away, leaving Audrey in charge until a few years ago when she was finding it difficult to access the ringing room and retired from ringing. Her departure was the end of an era, and left St Paul's with only four regular ringers. The future looked decidedly grim.

Suddenly and unexpectedly, the situation began to improve as two ringers arrived separately in the area and joined our band. The future was looking much brighter, and then Covid hit the country.

At the end of lockdown, several local towers found themselves without enough ringers but luckily our band had not lost anyone. Last year a new vicar came to St Paul's and brought us a ready made ringer in the form of his daughter. Later in the year, a lapsed local ringer returned.

Things were improving until our steeple keeper Ian needed surgery, which limited what he could do on the bells, which are crammed into a very tight space where access is ideal for a contortionist. Our lovely Hastings Stays are a nightmare to change and have probably been called many unflattering and almost certainly unprintable names over the years.

At the launch of the Ring for the King project, I was the only one who could teach bell handling. At this point, fate lobbed another large spanner into the works as I was rushed off to A&E, twice, and was out of action for most of November and December.

Was I up to the job of teaching several new learners, taking into account my recent illness, the facts that I'd done very little ringing over the last 20 years and had learnt to ring around 55 years ago in the sixth form? There was only one way to find out!

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Initially the question was academic as we had no Ring for the King recruits, but all it took was a notice on our area Facebook page and, within a couple of weeks we had seven new learners, with three more starting now.

We started two silent learners' practices in mid-February, in addition to our normal Thursday night practice. What a pleasure it's been; our learners got on extremely well, were very supportive of each other and applauded when anyone achieved something new. I was determined to get them to feel a welcome and important part of the St Paul's band, from day one, with a focus on retention.

Our new ringers have shared their enthusiasm with each other. Carol provided badges for the coronation day ringers. Kathryn produced buttonhole flower arrangements. Shop owner Amanda has posted videos and pictures of herself at various stages of learning on social media page, drawing large numbers of positive comments. David managed to have T-shirts printed with just a fortnight's notice.

When the big day came, what a day it was! We met at early and roped in a passer-by to take the team photo. As for the actual ringing. I've never known an atmosphere like it in a ringing room. Each of our new ringers passed significant milestones, accompanied by loud cheers and applause from the rest. It was very emotional and it made the whole exercise worthwhile.

GEOFF SMITH



A delightful problem to have

The community in Eckington, Derbyshire responded very favourably when we returned to ringing after lockdown, especially around the Jubilee and the late Queen's funeral. In December we joined the Ring for the King recruitment campaign, and ran a taster session in early January.

We were interviewed live via WhatsApp on the BBC Breakfast programme on Sunday 7th January and a couple of live local radio interviews followed, so we soon had 14 recruits. We split these into two groups and started training sessions on Tuesday evenings and Saturday mornings. They made good progress under our four accredited teachers, augmented to six when two more of our experienced ringers attended an ART course in March. By mid April our number of trainees had increased to 17, so we had 31 ringers to accommodate over the coronation weekend. What a delightful problem to have!

Over the four days everyone got several rings, which included two quarter peals. We rang lots of rounds and call changes including one of the two versions we know of Kings. We had a 'make your own crown' competition, and those sitting out were encouraged to take pictures for social media to keep our community in the loop. With all our crowns and our new polo shirts, the event became an enjoyable experience and a photogenic opportunity to promote what fun ringing church bells is.

Our band included ringers ranging in age from 9 to 90, including one who rang for both coronations, all having a brilliant experience that will be remembered for decades..

Over the weekend we rang for more than six hours without sound control and we have had nothing but positive responses from our local community. We look forward to the future with great heart.

DON JONES