

Tower Report for St Mary's Barnes Annual Review 2015-2016

"O Lord we thank you for the part we play in your church and pray that the sound of these bells may proclaim your glory and summon the faithful to worship" This prayer or its equivalent, when led by either the Rector or Deacon, has been said in the Tower each Sunday by the small band of ringers who attend religiously so that service may be given, and was said with the exception of two Sundays throughout the past year.

So regular has been the ringing service that the lack of bells on the 3rd May was the first for many years. It resulted from a small fall of mortar from the west window that raised alarms beyond its calling, and although some felt nothing more needed to be done other than provide the ringers on bells 7 and 8 with hard hats, caution prevailed.

The second absence reflected the numbers in the band, for on 19th July the ringers were enjoying their summer outing to south Devon, in the area of Newton Abbott, Bovey Tracey and Torquay. There were 3 ringers left in Barnes but as one was officiating the Service it was not possible to provide anything other than tolling, and that seemed inappropriate, so this time silence prevailed.

And that leads to the health of the band in terms of numbers. The total age of the ringers is known only to God but does not appear to be getting smaller. To further recruitment the Tower manned a stall at the BCA Volunteers day held at the Old Sorting Office which attracted quite a bit of interest and some potential new recruits.

Training has become increasingly demanding with practical sessions being held in the Tower on week days, some starting at 07.30! This in part reflects the new ethos in training that is pervading the ringing world and encourages teachers to offer their pupils as much time as possible in as short a time as possible so as to get them handling their bell competently. Once that is achieved a ringer gains personal satisfaction from their ringing and is far more likely to persevere and become a useful member of the band.

To help this process we hope to install two dumb bells in the tower, i.e. mechanisms that feel like a bell, respond like a bell but are silent, as in "dumb". These will enable students to work silently at their handling either by themselves or with a trainer, for they have to learn to follow another bell, ringing not being a solo activity. To date the ringers have raised nearly £500 for the bells and an application drafted (which will be submitted early in 2016) to the Diocese for permission to install them. The plans for serious fundraising will then be put into action.

Training nationally has also seen a concerted growth in activity with formal training programmes now in place for "teachers". The Surrey Association hosted a training day at St Mary's which was attended by many and spawned considerable interest amongst ringers both here and in neighbouring towers. Trisha has since been accredited by the Association of Ringing Teachers (ART) as a Module 1 Teacher and Eddie Hartley as a Mentor, which is a feather in the cap for the Tower. Using the new ART teaching methods they ran some fairly intensive training over the summer. One of the new recruits is now ringing regularly for Barnes and another for All Saints Fulham.

In addition to these general issues the Tower held its Winter Outing to Cambridgeshire on 31st Jan in awful weather (snow and slush), its AGM on 28th Feb, which incorporated a day of ringing and a Dinner for ringers and guests which this year was held in the Ellerton Room,

prepared by Penny Dupre, to the delight of all present. It was at this event that the Beadle's Bell recently returned to St Mary's, was shown to the ringers. Tower cleaning in March and manning the coffee shop, ringing for Archbishop Rowan Williams in June and the events surrounding the 800th anniversary of the Magna Carta and its association with St Mary's, October saw the ringers manning the coffee shop, again, and attending the Training session for ringers.

Against this we have rung for 4 choral Evensongs, 6 weddings and 2 funerals. 4 peals have been rung at St Mary's (2 by visiting bands) and 20 Quarter peals. Another 6 quarter peals have been rung by the band at other local towers. 46 practice sessions have been provided on Saturday mornings during the year and approximately the same number of practices have been held on Friday evenings.

We have once again rung handbells with adult and junior members of the congregation for pre-Christmas visits to Viera Gray House and Walsingham Lodge as well as for the Barnes Festival evening, raising money for Under Tree Schools.

The Tower continues to be a very active centre for bell ringing in the area.

There have been many highs and lows through the year but one of the highs that deserves a note is that of Barbara Ghezzi, who was taught here in Barnes, who rang her first peal at St Mary's in December after only 16 months training! A marvellous achievement by a young ringer that reflects the virility of the band. And the low that all have us have felt has been the departure of our dear secretary Kristen who brought so much to the Tower and its life, and provided the beautifully illustrated record of events that illuminates our bell ringers' section of the Parish website. Kristen had to move to Southwark and now rings at St Vedast in Foster Lane. Her secretarial duties have been shared amongst others; teething problems should be expected.

Membership of the band at St Mary's for 2015-2016 was as follows:

Officers

Trisha Hawkins
Charles Turnbull
Jill Wigney
Kristen Frederickson

Michael de Freitas
Giles Dimock
Eddie Hartley
Eddie Heath
Andrew Howard-Smith
Ann Lynes
Katharine Malvern
Jimmy May
Christine Northeast
Monica Trow
Mike Wigney
Richard Worrall

Juniors

Freya Fraser
Camille Rouault
Georgie Stein-Hemmings

Honorary Member

Colin Yandle