

St Mary's Barnes Bellringers – Annual Report for 2023

2023 was a vibrant and busy year at Barnes with the first few months very much dominated by teaching 'Ring for the King' recruits in readiness for the Coronation. We also found ourselves becoming media stars when, fuelled by the interest in the RFTK initiative, TV crews from both London and abroad filmed our training sessions. Trisha worked tirelessly in the lead up to the coronation, holding many mid-week sessions in addition to the Saturday practices. However, she would be the first to acknowledge that it was very much a team effort, with many Barnes ringers supporting the sessions, by either helping the learners or simply making coffee! We were also very grateful for help from a number of other trainers from the area. Coronation day saw us ringing first thing in the morning then returning in the afternoon for a wonderful tea party attended by around 50 people and taking centre stage on the food table was a wonderful coronation cake made by Louise. 35 people in total rang for the King that afternoon and our ringing was recorded on Bellboard with all the other ringing events taking place that weekend:

<https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1642154>

It was unfortunate that due to the ill health of the conductor, our peal attempt on 8th May to celebrate the coronation was cut short. However, it was a good experience for myself, Dominic and James, all of whom were part of the resulting half-peal which was also recorded as part of the celebrations on Bellboard.

One busy weekend was followed by another when on Saturday 14th May we hosted the Surrey Association's AGM. The cream teas we provided for the attendees received much praise, so thanks go to all those who baked beforehand and helped on the day. We then had a little time to recharge our batteries before it was all hands-on deck for the annual tower clean in preparation for the tower opening as part of the Barnes Fair on 8th July. Thanks again to those that helped with the extensive clean and on the day of the tours enabling us to raise £197.70 for the church.

July saw the annual Barnes summer tour taking us to Hartington in the Derbyshire Dales. Despite rather a lot of rain, it was a most successful trip. It was lovely that we had some of our less experienced ringers with us alongside the more experienced. I was pleased too that we were able to support two young ringers, Fraser and Dylan to come with us resulting in an age spread from 16 to 80+! We also managed to score 13 quarter peals. We look forward to returning to Derbyshire in Summer 2024.

December saw us once again ringing handbells in our local community. Many thanks to those who supported the ringing at Viera Grey and Walsingham Lodge care homes, the Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability and the carols in the churchyard. Our ringing outside Marks and Spencer as part of the Barnes Christmas Festival saw us raising over £130 for the homeless charity, Glass Door, in just one hour!

Post coronation, our Saturday practices have continued to flourish, and it has been wonderful to see ringers making continued progress. Our Saturdays regularly see us offering clamped-bell handling followed by open-ringing taking us from rounds and call changes to plain hunt, plain bob doubles and grandsire doubles. The practices are sometimes very busy indeed and it is often a challenge to ensure everyone gets an equal chance to ring and at an appropriate level. However, people keep coming back so we must be doing something right! In addition to the Saturday practices, Trisha has continued to run mid-week handling sessions for learners. This has enabled ringers to make more rapid progress and it has been wonderful to see the 'Chiswick Ringers' now regulars at Sunday service ringing at Chiswick. In addition to training ringers for Chiswick, we have enabled training of new ringers for the new bells at Roehampton.

Friday evening QP attempts and practices have continued to thrive and as you will see in the QP report, we have scored 34 quarters throughout the year. Whilst a couple of these were not actually on Fridays, and three were at Mortlake (due to events at Barnes), they represent 37 firsts for both ringers and conductors. The practices have been well attended and progress made at many levels. I think it is wonderful that between 6.30 pm on a Friday evening and 12 noon on a Saturday, we can offer ringing opportunities ranging from beginners' bell-handling to spliced surprise major!

Sunday service ringing has been very well attended throughout the year and I would like to thank all those who regularly come along, it is so very much appreciated. We also had a good attendance on both Christmas Eve and Christmas Day this year which was lovely. There has been much work going on too behind the scenes in the tower and clock room throughout the year and I would like to extend thanks to Nick and Anthony for all their hard work in the realm of tower maintenance.

So, my second year as tower captain has been a busy but rewarding one. It has been wonderful to welcome new regular faces as part of our ringing community here; whilst they have come to learn they have also given so much back in return. Thank you all for your help and support.