

Virtual Outing and Virtual Ringers Tea

Who said you couldn't have a Ringers Outing during Lockdown? With Ringing Room and Zoom anything is possible and so quick to travel between the towers.

Though, over the last year our band has met on several occasions either socially distanced or on Zoom we hadn't really had a whole afternoon together. Encouraged by two of the things to do for **Tail Ends in 50 Virtual Ringing** things I set about to plan an outing.

It started off quite simply to ring at two or three towers and have tea in the middle and drinks at the end as you would for a real outing but it sort of snowballed. I was worried that people might get bored of sitting by the computer all afternoon so we decided on only two towers and those chosen were of two ringers who support our online band here in Lytchett Matravers. So, our first tower was at Broadfield Park in Somerset with Mick Howes followed by Hogwarts Castle in Scotland with Jack Pease. It started to come together when we received a delightful O.W.L letter from Professor McGonagall accepting our request to ring at Hogwarts.

Towers sorted, now to think about tea. In our last Guild Face to Face magazine there were 4 cake recipes from members of the Guild to try, getting us ready for returning to ringing. Between our ringers we made 2 of Pat's perfect Parkin, 5 of Gran's Victoria Sponges, 3 Chewy Cake and 3 Dark Side cakes with a few variations on some of the recipes. These were then delivered around the village or to neighbours if outside the village so everyone had a taste. More plans were then prepared to entertain during the afternoon.

On the day, we were delighted that all of our band less one who was sadly unwell were able to join in so that was 14 of us, and also Steph from the 'other' Lytchett. We were supported by our trusty helpers Jack, Mick and Jane Pridmore and were delighted to welcome Stephen our vicar, Robert Wellen our Guild Master and Vicki Rowse who kindly lent us her Zoom account so we didn't have to keep going in and out of Zoom every 40 minutes.

Our first tower was all the way over in Somerset at their heavy 12 bell tower and organised by Mick where we rang lots of things from Call Changes to Grandsire and the finale was to ring rounds on their heavy 16. We were delighted that Mick's wife Karen came to join us for Rounds. I'm not sure if Mick would have got any supper that night as he put her on the heaviest bell – she must have been exhausted. We then broke up into groups for tea at **'The Rope Retreat'**, **'Sally's Social Space'** or **'The Stay at Home Café'**. Robert was able to join us here at 'The Stay at Home Café' and had the opportunity to chat to some of our ringers. One of the reasons we split into 3 rooms was that we have gained 3 new ringers during lockdown and it gave them the opportunity to chat more to our ringers in smaller groups as there is not so much opportunity to chat in Ringing Room practice nights.

Our **Head Baker**, Ann Manning had organised us all into making cakes. Our reviews of the cakes were:

Victoria Sponge: Well risen, light, nice soft texture, filling tasty. Easy recipe, ideal for first timer.

Chewy Cake: Cross between a flap-jack and tray bake. Super simple to make. Slightly on the sweet side.

Parkin: Easy to make as everything goes in one bowl. Great with butter spread on the top. Very substantial.

Chocolate Cake: Super scrumptious with just the right amount of sweetness. Easy to make. Variations on the icing were a lighter fudge icing or a ganache.

The previous week our **Travel Agent**, Helen had sent us a special O.W.L delivery ticket including a password letter to enable us to catch the train from Platform 9¾ up to Hogwarts. Though a little late we were allowed in to ring there and thanks to Professor McGonagall (AKA Jack Pease) for running that ringing session. We had to type our password into the **Chat in Ringing Room** before we were allowed to ring (This

was to encourage people to use the chat which it transpired some didn't know existed) The letters were all magicked together to form an anagram of two words – one a bellringing word and another a 'Harry Potter' word. Thank goodness Sarah got the first word **GRYFFINDOR** so she received the first key to unlock the door to get us out of the tower and Sue got the second word **GUDGEON** to get the second key as the door was double locked. (Special congratulations to Sue who is one of our new recruits and only once rang a bell at an Open Day over a year ago – she had clearly done her homework the previous week when they did some work on naming the parts of a bell) When we left, the keys remained in the door but Sarah and Sue received the keyrings which were made from the old Headstocks following our Bell Restoration in 2019. At Hogwarts, we rang things like Rounds to Reverse Rounds, Plain Bob Doubles, Rounds on 14 but then the speciality for Hogwarts which some of us had learnt was Transfiguration Place Doubles which we rang twice. We had been advised that the conductor at Hogwarts will be making his calls in parseltongue when we were ringing **Transfiguration Place Doubles**. Go and Stop, were Lumos and Nox. (Wand-lighting and wand-extinguishing charms respectively).

Following ringing at Hogwarts Castle, **Professor McGonagall** consulted with the '**sorting hat**' to decide which Hogwarts house we would be joining for our second refreshment break. These were one of Hufflepuff, Slytherin or Gryffindor. Ravenclaw was being used by the Hogwarts senior students for their N.E.W.T exams so we had to move quietly to our selected Tea Room. We were also joined here by our vicar Stephen who had magicked himself into the main hall at Hogwarts while we were ringing. Luckily Viv and John had joined us here and were able to put a spell on us to be whisked off to the houses where we had the opportunity to talk to a different group of ringers and friends and drink more tea or Hobgoblin beer.

"And now about the cauldron sing, Live elves and fairies in a ring, Enchanting all that you put in."

I think we all thought 3 hours in front of the computer would get VERY dull and I was concerned people would drift away during the second tea break but we all re-joined the main room for a final chat and farewell and were surprised how quickly the afternoon had passed. I was even asked when the next Outing would be!

Debbie Phipps (Professor Pomona Sprout) Tower Captain at Lytchett Matravers