

## **Not from the Belfry**

I hope many of you have heard the bells ring out again from the Cathedral on the last few Sunday afternoons for the Eucharist. It has been our joy and we hope yours too, even if it has been a very short session and with a different mix of bells (in order to keep to strict social distancing we have missed out some bells so it sounds like a pentatonic scale)

Reading the optimistic News From the Belfry in the Magazine reminds me how much has changed since February! I will start with the negative effects of the 'Lockdown' on ringing first, and then move on to more positive aspects.

The most disappointing result of not ringing since March (except the obvious one of not ringing our glorious-sounding bells each week) has been the total cessation of teaching our promising group of new learners. Sadly it will be impossible to restart our training for the foreseeable future, as teaching someone to handle a bell requires very close physical monitoring. We hope that the learners we had will consider returning to the tower when we eventually resume our teaching.

We are also very sorry not to be able to continue the training we have been doing with our improving ringers, who were progressing so well, and hope that we will be able to carry on where we left off when we can hold normal practices again.

The problems of restarting to ring are fewer for us at the Cathedral than most other towers, due to the large belfry and well-spaced bell ropes. However we have had to restrict ringing to a small group of invited ringers, only ring one bell each per session and only ring for 15 minutes. We are gradually allowing all our confident ringers a turn on Sunday afternoons, but it will not be possible to start practices again until restrictions are much eased.

On a more positive note, we have been holding regular practices on an internet platform called Ringing Room. It is a bit like Zoom with ropes and the sound of bells, and it has enabled us to ring methods without the problems of handling our rather awkward bells! This has been a revelation to some of our improving ringers, who have learned all kinds of interesting methods, and ring them better than some of the more experienced ringers! The technology has sometimes had us stumped, either because of our ineptitude or the limitations of our internet connections, and many times we have come to a grinding halt in the ringing and dissolved into laughter! But it has kept us going, and more importantly kept us together as a social group.

*Barbara Bell*