



RNGB AGM Outing in Surrey 5th March 2016

The radio weather forecast promised a rather miserable day but that didn't dampen the spirits at the prospect of meeting up with friends who don't often spend time with each other.

Our first tower was **Ss Peter & Paul, Nutfield**, an ancient church dating from Domesday with a 15thC tower. The church had a lovely welcoming well kept air about it and was full of interest including a 17thC font of local stone and wonderful wooden carved reredos. Some of the six bells date from 1662, they were easy to ring, sounded very tuneful and we rang a range of methods to cater for all. The rope spider was guarded by model bats which meant ringers were making surreptitious glances skyward from time to time!



Next we were at **St Mary the Virgin, Bletchingly** by which time it had begun to snow but thankfully none of it settled. It was another very well cared for church with memorials and tombs well worth inspection. Apparently ringers had been paid in ale to ring for King Henry VIII and given 6d when Queen Elizabeth I visited. The hassocks depicted a wide variety of organisations and memorials including the RN, WRNS and D-Day. The 10 bells were a joy to ring and sounded glorious, we all did them justice with our best ringing, especially notable in view of the fact that we ring together so infrequently. A tiger skinned spider guarded the rope spider in this tower... what would be in the next?!

St John the Evangelist, Redhill, a Victorian built church, stands proudly on a rise in the town and its elegant spire makes it visible from some distance. The smallish but comfortable ringing chamber was well used. The bells were easy and tuneful but the gentle swaying of the tower quite apparent as the bells moved. Here, as in all the towers, we rang a variety of methods to suit everyone. The ceiling around the rope spider was elaborately decorated with foliage, ladybirds, cupids, spiders and all manner of fruits.





Next stop was Betchworth where all 27 of us made a beeline for The Dolphin to appease our rumbling stomachs, but due to being a very popular place to eat meant a longer than expected wait for food, though once it arrived it was most delicious and definitely appeased our pangs of hunger.

Then it was **St Michael, Betchworth** and approaching through the archway and along the path the first striking aspect is the crazy paving facing of the church which, on entry, can be seen continued inside. The well-kept ringing chamber was quite small with a low ceiling and, disappointingly, nothing decorating round the rope spider!! Yet another ring of bells that were a pleasure to ring as well as listen to.

The final ring of the day was at **St Mary the Virgin, Buckland** which lies in the heart of a picturesque community cut in half by the very busy A25. Access to the tower was via an attractive spiral wooden staircase built in 1860 by a Mr Woodyer. The light bells have a good sound. Ringing complete we all filled the pews for the service which was conducted by Rev Carol Coslett, who spoke in her address of the blind man who was healed at the Pool of Siloam after which he went to spread the Word of God; she likened the ringing of church bells to spreading of the Word.



After the service, it was a short walk to The Reading Room for tea and the AGM. As usual we had a superb variety of delicious food upon which we fell like hungry wolves! We were wonderfully looked after by Molly and Michael Verity who must have lost count of the vast number of cups of tea and coffee they provided... many thanks to them both.

The AGM, chaired by the RNGB President, followed its usual format during which a new Ringing master was elected. Mark Robins stepped down after 9 years of service and was profusely thanked for his excellent work. Anna Gawley made history by being the first woman to be elected to the post and we all wished her well for the future. Thank you John Verity for organising such an enjoyable day.

Joan Barton

