



RNGB Armistice Centenary Quarter Peal Day 17th November 2018

To avoid ringers having to leave their local towers on a busy ringing Armistice Weekend, the Royal Naval Guild of Bellringers (RNGB) chose the Saturday following the 100th anniversary to mark the end of the First World War and pay our respects to the fallen and those injured. Due to a number of RNGB members having other ringing commitments we were assisted by Imogen, an ex RAF ringer and by the support of ringers from local bands.

The area of West Sussex was selected for family reasons by the organiser and because it is an area not previously visited by the RNGB, yet has ties to the Royal Navy. The former aerodrome at RNAS Ford next to our third tower, Arundel, was built in 1917 by German prisoners of war and was operational until 1920. It was then used by various companies and was again operational during WW II before being recommissioned by the Admiralty in 1945 as HMS Peregrine until 1958. The airfield finally closed in 1980.



We started the ringing day at St Mary, Goring-by-Sea, ringing Plain Bob Minor on a heavy six, ably conducted by Paul Wotton. This quarter peal was also dedicated to HRH Prince Charles on the celebration of his 70th birthday. Elspeth on the fifth managed extremely well, even though she realised too late to re-start the quarter that she could have done with a box to stand on. Her face turned a very fetching shade of pink with the exertion! The church had a well-presented exhibition detailing the lives of the fallen commemorated on the war memorial.

Church members had provided us with refreshments, which was very welcome as some of our ringers had come from far afield.

We then moved down the road towards Worthing to St Botolph, Heene, for a very decent 1260 of Plain Bob Triples, reinforced by local Rik Clay and conducted by Mark Robins. Of note was the seriously scary decorative spider adorning the rope spider! The War Memorial remembers Stoker 1st Class Frederick Dredge RN, aged 20, the last man from Heene killed before the Armistice. He died on 9th November 1918 when a torpedo fired by the U boat U50 struck the engine room of the battleship HMS Britannia on passage to Gibraltar, the ship later sank with the loss of fifty men.



We all eventually managed to find a parking space near a pub and church in Arundel, a small, yet busy town. We lunched in the St Mary's Gate Inn who fed us well and in time for those of us to continue ringing into the afternoon, at St Nicholas, Arundel.



There we were joined by 3 local ringers: Rik and Val Clay and Moya Hills and attempted the quarter peal of Grandsire Triples believed to have been composed by Sgt Albert Wakley in the trenches before he returned home to die in February 1919. Although we did not achieve the full quarter peal, the ringing was superb, the best of the day, such that passers-by came into the church to listen and had to be turned away from coming up the tower to watch.

We took the opportunity of the early finish to take refreshments at a local café opposite the castle walls (this is the castle which my daughter wanted to bounce on when she was a toddler!), before driving down to Lyminster, which was an oasis away from the bustle of the tourists. The ringing chamber holds some wonderful dragons made predominantly of rope, reflecting the ancient story of a dragon called a Knucker which lived in a nearby pool. Apparently, the pool, the Knucker Hole, is bottomless and at one time the 6 bell ropes were reputedly tied together and let down to try to find the bottom, unsuccessfully.



Assisted by local ringer David Hall, we rang a quarter of mixed doubles, including 2 methods that I, at least, had never rung before. At the end of a long day I was somewhat weary and Mark, the conductor, wisely decided to cut short the St Osmund and extend the St Simons.

A successful and an enjoyable day of ringing in West Sussex. The weather was kind and the local ringers were extremely helpful and supportive. The churches were imaginatively and tastefully adorned with poppies, silhouettes and other images of remembrance and gratitude to those who gave their all for us.

Anna Gawley