

## Test Ring Sounds Out Across Ledbury



On November 26th the bells returned from Whites of Appleton. The 'old eight' had been duly restored and retuned and we now have two additional trebles. After a brief Covid-secure blessing and dedication in the church yard all ten were successfully raised and reinstalled in the tower over the next few days. In order for the Church to sign off the project with Whites it was necessary to ring all the bells in the different combinations which we will commonly use. Since this was part of the work, permission was given for ten local ringers to test ring the bells. On the afternoon of December 3rd a rather 'rusty' band of volunteers met to ring the new peal for the first time. Out of consideration for the locals, and to enable the performance of the bells to be better assessed, they were rung up singly. Rounds on the full ten were followed by rounds on the back eight and finally rounds and some simple changes on the light front six. All the ringers present expressed their pleasure at both the sound and the mechanical performance of the bells. Sadly, due to the continuing restrictions imposed by Covid, we are still unable to ring more than one bell at a time during lockdown.

## Service Ringing

For a brief period, when Ledbury found itself in Tier 1, service ringing was permitted, although with the usual Covid precautions in place. This allowed us to ring 5 well-spaced bells plus one, as we included one married couple. It wasn't perhaps the musical experience we would have hoped for as a start on the new bells, but it was a pleasure to be able to ring for a Sunday service and for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

With the reintroduction of restrictions we are once again unable to meet to practice or ring together for services, but it is permitted to chime or toll a single bell for services. Until the work began on the clock and carillon (qv) it was possible to announce the morning service at St Michael's with ten minutes of tolling, which gave an opportunity to try out the sound and feel of the new bells, even if only one at a time. It was also a good way to test the muscle memory!

Although the bells had to be silent again while The Cumbria Clock Company were working in the tower, we are now once again able to announce the morning service at St Michael's with a single bell tolling. And as the Archbishops have called on us as a nation to pray each day at 6pm, we will attempt to ring a single bell each day at this time as a reminder.



## Clock & Carillon overhauled

The work on the bells necessitated the complete removal of the hammers and wires by which the clock chimes operate and the hymn tunes are played. 22 wires attach these hammers to the to the clock mechanism and to the drum of the carillon (more properly called an 'extended chime', but locally always referred to as a carillon!). All the bells have more than one hammer, as the time taken for the hammer to reset is too long to allow two notes to sound close together, as required by many of the hymn tunes and (in the case of one bell) by the Westminster chimes. The funding of the restoration of all 22 hammers was entirely covered by sponsorship as many local people responded to the appeal to 'Give your Name to a Note'.

The hammers on the bells must be lifted away before the bells can be rung full circle. In the past this has necessitated considerable human effort as they were pulled off manually from below. In the new system this job is achieved by an electrical barring-off mechanism operated by a single switch: a great relief to the ringers!

The clockmakers, The Cumbria Clock Company, completed this work on 4th Feb and carried out the first full sounding of the chimes and the hymn tunes on that day. It has been heartwarming to see the response on the local Facebook page to the return of this feature of Ledbury life.

