



RNGB Trafalgar Weekend 23rd to 25th October 2015

At the edge of the Cotswolds and back

The 2015 Trafalgar weekend (23 to 25 Oct 15) of the Royal Naval Guild of Bellringers was set to the east of Swindon. The weekend started off with some afternoon ringing at Chiesldon (6) and Wanborough (8), with many arriving late because of the traffic, it being the half term weekend. After some good ringing it was off to the hotel at South Marston to book in. Despite some confusion over the timing of dinner, 18 members sat down to an evening meal and seemed reluctant to leave the table until well after the plates had been cleared away. The meeting up of old friends is always a lively time and I hope that the other diners in the restaurant were not too put out with the noise level at our table.

While some of the non-ringers sampled the delights of the hotel spa and swimming pool, the ringing fraternity had organised to share cars this year instead of a bus. This was an experiment after many years hiring a bus, but with rising costs and dwindling numbers it was decided to try car sharing and see how it went. So a fleet of cars left the hotel under darken clouds with a not very encouraging weather forecast.

The first tower of Stratton St Margret, not far from the Swindon ring road, was a delightful set of 8 and there was an impressive church hall alongside for those who had travelled a long way and were in need of a comfort break. The weather by this time was very damp. The numbers swelled up as some members had come for the day due to commitments on the Friday and Sunday that restricted them to just attending Saturday. It was then off to Blunsden with its association with the Feke family. Another 8 but a light 5 ½ cwt this time.

The final tower to complete the morning was out in the country side along a long drive at Hannington. Although a 6, it had the most amazing open spiral staircase to the ringing chamber, which reminded many of an Archimedes screw. The stairs also had the strange phenomena of being narrower at the top than the bottom, so despite climbing up one had the feeling of growing as you got higher as the space got tighter. We would have all liked to have lunched at the Hannington Jolly Tar but unfortunately they could not take the numbers.

So it was off to lunch at the Saracen's Head in Highworth where 32 sat down together. All just managed to eat before it was off to Highworth church for an 18 cwt eight. The ringing chamber included a fearsome set of horns and a peal board where the age of the treble ringer was included. A peal at fourteen and half is impressive. It was here that a picture was taken in the ringing chamber as the numbers had swelled to 25 ringers, something we have not achieved for some time on a weekend outing. From there we went to Longcot (8), which had evidence of a Royal Naval damage control party with an acrow prop supporting one of the wooden roof beams. It also had a memorial plaque to a couple who had lost their lives on the Titanic. There was also tea and coffee on offer, which was a very kind gesture of the locals and much needed by some. It was then onto the final tower at South Marston (6), where ringing went on beyond the allotted time as we were enjoying ourselves so much.

Some it was homeward bound for some but for others it was back to hotel to use the spa facilities, before 16 sat down to dine. The noise level and the reluctance to leave the table were the same as the previous evening.

It was a rolling breakfast next morning, after an extra hour in bed due to the clocks changing, with farewells and members wending their way home, with thanks to the organisers.

