

Talk of the Tower

Upgraded Silverware

Some of you may recall an article last year when Ash Kathuria entered his first ringing competition as part of the Goldington band. The result was a ringing trophy that was held in the tower for the past year until being taken back for the contest this year – and exchanged for something even better!

The venue this year was Elstow Abbey on 4 May 2019 – held slightly later in the afternoon than normal to allow the Christian Aid abseilers to complete their descents first! After all, I can only imagine that having the noise of the bells start up beside you and feel the tower start to sway from their movement probably wouldn't have made the prospect of descent any more attractive...

With heavy showers the order of the day, the ringers from Goldington gathered with other ringers from across the Bedford area for the annual 'striking contest'.

The aim of the exercise is to see who can complete the best test piece of ringing – this generally means ringing at an even speed with evenly spaced gaps between the bells so that every bell can be heard clearly without lumpy pauses in between or the sound of one bell clipping too closely beside (or even clashing over the top of) the next. A neutral judge is brought in, the ringing order of the teams is drawn on the day and then each team has the chance to do their best.

This year the Goldington team consisted of Jenny Thompson, Gale Bevan, Jim Framp, Peter Blunt, Andrew Dennison and Dorothy Kirby. Having won the rounds category in 2018 ('rounds' is the term used when the bells are rung in descending order 123456 from the lightest/highest bell to the heaviest/deepest bell and repeated without any change to the order each time) the aim this year was to return to the more challenging method category.

A 'method' is effectively a pattern that the ringers follow so that the order that the bells ring in changes each stroke eg: 123456, 213546, 231456, 324156, 342516 and so on. This means that individual bells have to keep changing speed subtly to ring slightly earlier or later in the sequence each time, thus being more challenging than ringing steadily in the unchanging 123456 order of 'rounds'. All the ringers must also fit in together as a team to keep the ringing sounding good.

On this bank holiday weekend there was a slightly depleted field with only five teams in total but nonetheless the Goldington team put in a good performance and managed to win the contest for the first time since 2007! The judge even described the piece as "pleasing to listen to" which is always good to hear.

The cup was collected from the judge by Gale, who started to ring in 2011 before her daughter's wedding, so this is her first win in the methods category.

We are a small band at Goldington but luckily with still enough ringers to maintain a relatively active band. Indeed, Goldington is one of only two towers in the area (out of more than 20 towers) who have reliably managed to field a team at the striking contest every year for the past 10 years.

This record is something that we should feel particularly proud of as a church, irrespective of any silverware that may result from time to time, but we could always do with new ringers to keep this tradition alive. So if you or someone you know would like to come and give it a go (with no commitments ever to join us in competition!) then please do come along to a Wednesday night practice or speak to any of the ringers. The tower will also be open during the church fête on Saturday 29th June.



Andrew Dennison