

Society of Roving Ringers – Bellingringing ... on tour ... by bicycle ... since 1947

by Peter Richards



“Suitcases and Survivors at Stepney” – the final tower of the 2019 reunion

2018 saw the Roving Ringers annual summer tour based at Leominster, Herefordshire where we had booked out the 32-bed youth hostel from 28th July to 4th August. From there we cycled out each day, up to 43 miles, and rang at 4 or 5 towers.

In February this year (23rd and 24th) we visited London for our winter reunion, ringing at a variety of towers in and around the city and enjoying a formal dinner at the Doubletree Hilton in Greenwich.

The **2019 summer tour is 27th July – 3rd August** and will be based at Thurlby Youth Hostel, Lincolnshire, from whence we will cycle out each day to experience the towers of that region. The hostel has 21 beds and there is plenty of space for new Rovers. The 2020 reunion will be around Cardiff on 22nd and 23rd February.

The society was formed in 1947 when four ringers placed an advert in *The Ringing World* for like-minded folk to join their ringing and cycling tour. Little has changed since then with the society having toured annually since then. For practical reasons it is now invariably based at a self-catering hostel. 19 tourers took part in 2018, most staying all week and a few joining for part of the week only.

We aim for a high standard of ringing and, depending on who is on tour, can usually manage a variety of surprise major and surprise royal, along with a wide repertoire on 6 bells and plenty of Stedman, Grandsire etc. We ring for around an hour at each tour. 2018 saw us focusing on Cornwall Surprise Major, Canon Pyon Surprise Minor (a local speciality, which we succeeded in ringing at Canon Pyon) and Carlisle Surprise Minor, which we were including in touches of spliced by mid-week.

We await the master’s selection of focus methods for the 2019 tour ... The newly elected Ringing Master is Kevyn Hopkins,

taking over from Louise Palmer who has now served her year, leading us in admirable style. Louise had been elected master in 2017 but had to drop out of the tour at the last minute – sighs of relief were audible when she arrived at Leominster!

We are hopeful that Lincolnshire will be a flatter tour, although the tour secretary, Mike Wigney, who tours in his hand cycle, is adept at finding hills in the most unlikely places. Distances are usually 25 to 45 miles per day and an average speed of 10mph is ample to get between towers on time (although faster cyclists will not be alone and usually manage to find a suitable watering hole to make the

most of the wait for those moving at a more civilised speed!).

Highlights of the 2018 tour were the amazing 5 at Pembroke, lovely bells at Presteigne (8), Eardisland (8), Bromyard (10) and Eye (6), an impromptu concert from the St Edmundsbury Male Voice Choir and a sadistic cat at the hostel. The towers varied from the sublime to the ridiculous, with plenty in between. The Rovers were also pleased with the offerings in terms of local beers and ciders at the various pubs we visited. The country was fairly undulating and the weather was largely good, with very little call for waterproofs.

The 2019 winter reunion took us to such grand towers as Southwark Cathedral (12), St Lawrence Jewry (8), St Giles Cripplegate (12) and St Michael Cornhill (12). Around 35 Rovers, past, present and (we hope) future came, including at least one from each decade of the society’s past. Methods included Stedman and Erin Cinques, Little Bob Maximus, Cambridge and Yorkshire Surprise Royal, 8-spliced surprise major and the Cambridge 6 spliced surprise minor. Travel was largely on foot, and we were able to enjoy the winter sun.

Mark Chilcott, who has been a bastion of the society for a number of years, has stepped down as Reunion Secretary and Treasurer, and we are grateful for his involvement and the positivity he has brought. We are also grateful to Jonathan Slack for organising the 2018 reunion.

We are a friendly bunch and would be delighted to see some new faces in 2019. You will be very welcome if you are a good striker and confident in ringing Stedman Triples or trebling to Surprise Major methods. Please contact the 2019 Tour Secretary, Mike Wigney, for further details – email mike.wigney@dhl.com or phone 07748 933779. Find our group on Facebook too at www.facebook.com/groups/RovingRingers/

