

# ELKSTONE NEWSLETTER

Editor's Bumbings...

The Revd Arthur sent me the following link which is the Government stats on Elkstone. I'm not normally a stats person, but they are quite interesting!

<https://inform.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/2087468/elkstone.pdf>

The nicest stat I could glean, was that Elkstonians/Elkstonites (or fill in whatever you like to be referred to as), are 10% more satisfied with the local area as a place to live than the national average, hardly surprising when you look out the window at our views, we really are very fortunate.

There are some lovely pictures at the end of the Newsletter of the bells returning to their church after an incredible restoration project, well worth a look.

Hope you are all well & enjoying the last of the summer before Autumn & hopefully a vaccine, is upon us.

Laure, editor@elkstonevillage.com    Deadline For Next Newsletter, 20<sup>th</sup> September

Features			
Food Bank Notice			
Ride & Stride Saturday			
News From The Trust			
Bells Restored			
Regular Dates			
Waste & Recycling	Food Waste – Every Tuesday		
Waste & Recycling	All Bags, Bins & Boxes –8 <sup>th</sup> & 22 <sup>nd</sup> September		
Indoor Bowls	Every Tuesday - Village Hall – Ronnie – 870493 <b>Postponed</b>		
Art Club	Every Thursday 9am - Village Hall - Penny - 03330 119663 <b>Postponed</b>		
Relaxation Sessions	Village Hall <b>TBA</b> – info@alisonfernandes.co.uk		
Diary Dates			
Ride & Stride Saturday	Village Hall Car Park	12 <sup>th</sup> September	9.30am
Parish Council Meeting	Remote on Zoom	23 <sup>rd</sup> September	8.00pm
Church Bells Re-dedication	Elkstone Church	27 <sup>th</sup> September	3.00pm

## Food Bank Notice

We are going to put a new notice on the food bank box in the church porch. It will read like this: "Food donations left here will be collected each Tuesday morning for Cirencester food bank but if your own family are really in need then please help yourself."

## PCC members

## **News From The Trust**

The phase 3 plan from NHS Improvement setting out how hospitals need to respond in the next phase of the pandemic includes a quote that is relevant as the trust move forwards, "we're all in the same storm, but we're not in the same boat", to which our medical director added "our boats are pointing in the right direction as we move into winter".

Briefly we had choppy waters as A&E was overwhelmed & there were insufficient beds for those needing admission. When a 'critical incident' is called all meetings are cancelled; staff work towards freeing beds in cooperation with partners in the Integrated Care systems & governors are always kept fully informed. The whole system responded well, & we are back on course.

The temporary changes, put into place to deal with COVID, may have contributed to this but they also bring benefits. Clinicians reflect emergency care feels safer in the pandemic context & more scheduled operations are being performed in Cheltenham than have been done for several years, which is important, given the scale of the backlog. In light of recent political comments, I would like to assure you that the temporary changes will be reviewed by the County's Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting in September as part of the winter plan. Any permanent changes envisaged in the 'Fit for The Future' plan will be reviewed by a senate of independent clinicians drawn from across the South West.

Whilst the number of COVID cases in Gloucestershire is currently amongst the lowest in the country the possibility of local outbreaks & of a second surge remains. To help avoid that, it is imperative that we all continue to take care. We see on the news that people are tending to be less careful, so extra vigilance is necessary. Sadly, this was highlighted within the Trust, when, following a meeting of a clinical team who let their guard slip, were required to self-isolate for fourteen days when a member tested positive. These staff are committed to patient care so, to my mind, this shows how easy it is to inadvertently let our guard down.

I like to share positives amid the gloom & this month is no exception. We ended the year in financial balance. The 'Colleague Health & Wellbeing offer' launched for staff in April to support physical & mental wellbeing & which, at the time, attracted interest from other Trusts, was the subject to a special feature in the recent NHS People Plan. The Trust has been revalidated for the prestigious Gold Award as part of the Ministry of Defence's Employer Recognition Scheme & it became only the third Trust to receive a Blue Plaque from NHS FabStuff, (a social movement for sharing Health & Social Care ideas), in recognition of its empowering of front line staff, to deliver change & improvement & for sharing their work with others, enabling learning across a wider spectrum.

Finally, my current three-year term of serving you as a governor is ending soon. Working alongside an evolving board which encourages open communication & increased governor involvement I feel privileged to represent you, ensuring that your views are heard & keeping you informed about Trust policy. My past experiences, including being a carer from aged 14, help me to contribute positively & have been key in my work of initiating a project to encourage young people to become more involved with the Trust. I am seeking re-election & very much hope for your support so that I may continue to represent you & to ensure that my work with young people becomes embedded in Trust policy.

Anyone who is a registered member of the Trust can vote (see the Trust website <https://www.gloshospitals.nhs.uk/>) The closing date is Wednesday, 7 Oct 2020.

**Anne Davies (Public Elected Governor Cotswolds)**

## Ride & Stride Saturday

12<sup>th</sup> September 2020, 9.30am from the Village Hall car park.

Gloucestershire Historic Churches Trust (GHCTC) are delighted that despite Coronavirus, Ride+Stride 2020 will be taking place on 12<sup>th</sup> September.

More than ever, historic churches in Gloucestershire, South Gloucestershire & North Bristol need our support in these challenging times. Our churches cost on average £2500 per year to keep them clean, safe & open for visitors. During Lockdown there have been no regular collections at services, or visitors allowed in our churches to donate in our collection boxes. To raise funds for the Trust we will be running 2 events on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> September. 50% of the money raised for the Trust, will be awarded back to our Parish Church.

Ronnie will be leading a Cycle ride of about 16 miles calling at the churches to Daglingworth along the Ermin Way, making the journey home via Bagendon & North Cerney, keeping well away from major roads. If you feel you'd like to come along & take in some beautiful countryside & lovely churches, please give us a ring in advance – & bring a picnic.

Carole will be leading a walk of about 6.5 miles out of the village down the leafy woodland 'Olive's Walk' to Colesbourne & a visit to Colesbourne Church to sit & enjoy the churchyard for a few minutes. We'll walk back for liquid refreshments at the Colesbourne Inn before taking the level footpath through the village to Cockleford.

There is one very short, sharp, steep ascent before returning in to Elkstone. There are no stiles, there is a stony path descending to Colesbourne, & there were cattle in one field the day we walked it, so dogs must definitely be on a lead. Bring food bags as there are masses of sloes growing in the hedgerows en-route.

Both routes will start from the Village Hall car park at 9.30am.

Cars parked at the Village Hall car park are left at the Owners' risk - as there is no insurance cover for non-hall events, which are 100% suspended until Covid matters improve.

There is a Wedding in the Church which means we will not be starting at the Church.

Please let us know in advance if you can join us.

Please make your donations for Ride+Stride via DONATE.

Simply text the message RDSTR to the number 70970 to donate £5.

Or DONATE online to [www.nationalfundingscheme.org/](http://www.nationalfundingscheme.org/) & type St John's Church Elkstone into the Live Campaigns box. Or follow the URL link below:

<https://platform.nationalfundingscheme.org/organisations/donate?code=St+John%27s+Church+Elkstone>

A standard rate message charge will apply to your text giving. You will be able to register for Gift Aid if you would like to, giving an extra 25%.

**Carole & Ronnie 01242 870493 [carolebury@hotmail.com](mailto:carolebury@hotmail.com)**

## Elkstone Bells Restored

Elkstone villagers will have noticed that for the last year, Sunday services & weddings have been happening without the joyful sound of church bells. Long before the covid-19 pandemic, the Parochial Church Council (PCC) had decided that the time had come for a complete refurbishment of the bells & the fittings.

The bells of Elkstone parish church have been ringing out over Elkstone since 1657 but were becoming dilapidated with age & could no longer be safely rung. Therefore, the PCC agreed to initiate a tireless & enthusiastic fundraising campaign. Our fund-raising target was £40,000 & thankfully the villagers responded with generosity! As project manager I've had the privilege of coordinating a team of specialists in the restoration of bells. A large crowd

gathered on 5th August when the bells returned to sound out over the village once more! Change ringing originated in England in the 17th century. Originally a sport for young men, it rapidly evolved into a unique musical art form, part of the musical life of churches. Elkstone has been part of this tradition from near its earliest inception when the existing bells & frame were modified for “full circle” change.

Unlike much of the world, where bells are struck by a hammer or swung from side to side, change ringing requires the bells to be swung a full 360 degrees, starting & ending mouth upwards. The bells are hung high in the tower with the ringers some way beneath, each controlling their own bell with a rope. This control means that the bells can be sounded in a pre-determined order, the music of which is performed by a team & can last anywhere from three minutes to three hours.

Bells are quite simply the biggest & loudest musical instruments. Bell ringers are skilful musicians who often dedicate a significant portion of their lives to their music; to call to worship, to mark national & local events & to ring in celebration & in sadness. Elkstone is lucky – unlike many village churches it possesses a team of dedicated ringers. It is also lucky in that it possesses a very historic, & now fully restored ring of bells.

Originally a ring of four, with the largest weighing half a ton, cast in 1657 by Edward Neale of Burford, Elkstone bells were hung in a bell frame of medieval origin. Although these bells were rung, little is known about their condition & use. In 1719, Rudhall of Gloucester recast the 2nd bell of the original four, likely because it had become cracked. These four bells still bear the original inscriptions recording the names of the Churchwardens & Minister of the time.

Information about the bells is again unrecorded until 1882 when Taylors of Loughborough renewed the fittings & running gear. They also recast the 4th bell (which had likely become cracked). Additional strengthening irons were fitted to the bell frame which, by this time, had seen nearly 200 years of service & the British weather.

In 1927 the ancient bell frame was extended & a new bell cast as a war memorial by Thomas Bond of Burford. Its inscription reads, ‘Great War 1914-1918: Gerald Nolekin Horlick, died in active service July 5th 1918’. Although clearly in regular use, the bells remained a ring of five until, in 1977, Reginald Miles donated a new treble bell. This was hung alongside the ancient tenor bell in an additional frame made of African hardwood.

Immediately prior to the rehang, there had been concerns amongst ringers that the bells were not easy to ring & that their condition was deteriorating. There were certainly some alarming noises from upstairs during ringing! An inspection in 2018 confirmed that the running gear, most of it dating from 1882, was life expired & displaying some worrying signs of failure. In particular, the headstocks, which carry the full weight of the bell when being rung, were rotten & splitting. In some places handfuls of wood could be scooped out. Surprisingly, the bell frame, the oldest part of the installation, was in excellent condition for its age & gave no cause for concern, although much of the metal work fitted in 1882 was badly corroded. The bells themselves were in good condition although, as a result of never having been tuned as a complete instrument, did not blend well with each other & by modern standards were significantly out of tune. They also still contained their original cast in staples (a loop of cast iron cast into the head of the bell to enable a clapper to be suspended inside). Over time these rust & expand, often shattering the head of the bell.

In order to preserve the bells & ensure they continued to be heard in Elkstone, it was essential that restoration works were carried out. Discussions then turned to what could be done not only to restore the bells, but to make them an easier & more satisfactory instrument for ringers & listeners. At the time many were cast, tuning was undertaken by chipping pieces out the inside of the bell until it sounded correct. Accuracy was a matter of taste & judgement!

The industrial revolution brought with it the vertical lathe & the use of tuning forks which enabled bell founders to standardise & tune to pitch. It also gave them greater control of the harmonics within a bell, being able to accurately measure, plot, & adjust them. More recently, computer-controlled software has given us the ability to make even greater improvements. Despite these gains, until the last two to three years it has been traditional to tune bells in the UK by removing metal from the inside. However, lessons from our European neighbours have shown that greater control & effectiveness of the tuning process can be gained by removing metal from the outside, around the sound bow at the base of the bell. Only one other ring of bells in the UK had been tuned externally in this way & it was identified that Elkstone would be a prime second candidate.

As a result, there was significant interest from the Council of 'The Care of Churches' & other regulatory bodies, who have used the bells as a test case to assist with developing conversation practice.

In 2019 the bells were removed from the tower by Whites of Appleton Bellhangers & a team of ringers & volunteers. Concerns about the condition of the running gear were well founded, with much of the woodwork dismantling itself as the bolts were loosened. The bells were lowered to the tower floor, stripped of the old gear, & taken away to Appleton to be cleaned, tuned & fitted with brand new bespoke headstocks, wheels & running gear. This was the first time they had been seen outside since 1882

Additional strengthening steel rods were inserted, & all necessary ironwork was replaced & painted.

In August 2020 the bells returned to the church, looking resplendent with their new bespoke running gear. They were lifted into the tower on Wednesday 5th August where they were placed back into the frame. Over the next week Whites fitted them out & set them up for ringing. Finally, on Friday 14th August, the restored bells were heard for the first time across the village, their new & improved sound a powerful call to those who heard them.

The ringers, led by Simon Dann, are delighted with their restored & improved bells & would welcome anyone who would like to see them or learn to ring them. The dedication service will be held in the autumn following which training new ringers will commence with enthusiasm.

The PCC would like to thank all who generously gave time, money & expertise to the project. It would be invidious to list the names of donors in an article like this but suffice to say the major donors are recognised by brass plaques in the Tower some of which are associated with particular bells. The names of all donors apart from a few who wish to remain anonymous, are displayed in an illuminated plaque in the Nave.

The PCC are grateful to the volunteers who assisted with the works: Malcolm Taylor, Angela Dann, Simon Dann, Shaun Bailey, Becca Meyer, Simon Edmonds, Richard While, Ray Talbot, Dave Turner & myself, Simon Ridley.

Finally, the PCC are most appreciative towards Whites of Appleton Bellhangers who have produced a wonderful sounding instrument, suitable for ringers & beginners of all levels of expertise.

Now all that remains is for villagers to hear the bells & respond accordingly. After all I for one would much prefer to hear the sound of church bells than some of the alternative ways of calling people to prayer. Elkstone parish church has a rich heritage so let's be sure to maintain not only the building but the Christian ethos which could so easily be taken for granted.

**Simon Ridley, Project Manager**

### **Re-Dedication of Elkstone Bells**

We now have confirmation that the Bishop of Tewkesbury will be coming to re-dedicate the bells on Sunday 27 September 2020 at 3pm. Everyone in the village is most welcome although Covid-19 rules may mean numbers allowed inside will be limited.

**Arthur Champion (Revd) – Tel: 01242 870402 – New Rectory, Cowley**

(A selection of the many photographs taken by villagers and by project team members follows)



