

SCACR Northern District

Secretary's Report (2020) – Steph Pendlebury

I have a confession to make: usually I just use the previous year's report and change a few words. This method won't work for 2020. Although the Association's General Committee has been busier than usual, meeting monthly, things at District level have been much quieter than usual.

The year started out on a plain course: ringing with brunch on the first Saturday of the year (at Lower Beeding), then ringing on the wonderful new Westley bells and a fabulous tea for the February ADM at Lindfield, followed by a new members' event in March (making the most of Cowfold's new loo!). We weren't to know it then, but the final "stand" called at Cowfold would be the last for a District event in an actual ringing chamber for the remainder of the year. With a vaccine for COVID-19 being rolled out as I type, I am hopeful that we may be able to return to small face-to-face events in some form in 2021...

However, with the launch of Ringing Room and other online ringing platforms, combined with the wide uptake of Zoom video-meetings, a change of method is now possible. Previously, considerations such as size and accessibility of the ringing room, number and "go" of the bells, availability of a loo and kitchen facilities, and ease of parking, all restricted the number of towers that could be used for events and practices. Now all that is needed is an internet connection and computer, tablet or smartphone (headphones are advisable!). Although we have held a couple of online District events, the ease with which dozens of people (learners and helpers) from across two counties can take part at any given time provides an opportunity for a wide range of more focused Association practices. Hopefully these will help ringers at all levels to develop their skills and method repertoire, until we can get back into the tower to practise properly.

During the first lockdown, the District committee discussed what we could do to help ringers through this difficult period. We decided that it would be most useful to most people to increase the publication frequency of *Northern News* to monthly, to keep the community updated and bring people together. Big thanks to newsletter editor Katherine Potter for her hard work on this! Our BRF rep, Simon Alford, has provided advice to several towers over the past year (see his report). Thanks also to the District committee – Susie Bowen, Elaine Farrow (Ringing Master), Rosie Gregory, Chris Westwood and Richard Pendlebury – for their support; hopefully rather more of their ideas can be taken forwards in 2021...!

As ever, if Northern District members have requests or suggestions about practices or events (particularly virtual ones!), please do get in touch: sec-north@scacr.org.