

SURVEY OF RINGING FOR WEDDINGS

We received 45 replies, from Guild and Association members. All email replies have been acknowledged and those who chose the postal route are gratefully thanked too. The theme running through the replies is how seriously the tower captains take ringing for weddings, by sharing/borrowing ringers to ensure adequate numbers of ringers on the day.

With many ringers cooperating to share the task of ringing at a number of towers, it seemed sensible to ask what arrangements were made if the bride at one tower was later than planned, and how this was dealt with. Replies ranged from "We may grumble about it, but we have always waited!!!" to "Play it by ear" and the more thoughtful "We accept that the length of the wedding service can vary and obviously we have to wait if it's a long service, but we might ring for a shorter time if we knew that the bride had been that late."

Fees levied varied between £5 and £15 per rope, with the over-riding majority being £10 per rope. Although it seemed as though 90% charged a flat-rate fee, in reality this was often a simple multiple of the number of ringers and the charge per rope. In some cases there was a genuine flat-rate fee from which the aggregate price per ringer was deducted and a contribution to tower or church made from the remainder. 73% of all ringers donated all or some of their fees to church or tower for bell fund, days out etc. However, 27% either had no tower fund or made no contribution.

One ringer commented "I personally have recently married off both my daughters in 2005 and 2006 and it seems to me that everything connected with weddings costs an extortionate amount **except bellringers!!** Bearing in mind the difficulty in finding ringers to give up what can amount to sometimes **3 hours** on a summer's Saturday afternoon, I think the charge throughout Devon should be £25 per rope...amounts to about £8 per hour (including travelling) for a skilled worker!!" It should be noted that the fees at the tower remain unchanged.

60% ring before the service for an average of 30 minutes in a range of 15 to 45 minutes. All towers ring after the service, with the majority ringing for either 20 or 30 minutes in a range of 10 to 45 minutes. As a comment I would have to say that in our own experience, wedding guests like to chat after the wedding, and photographers need to be heard, so ringing for 45 minutes does seem a little long. Ringing with breaks may help accommodate the needs of all. In one instance we had unannounced competition from a bagpipe player and there was the temptation to compete. Those towers that normally only ring after, if asked to ring before and after would increase the fees, eg £50 for one ring to £80 for both.

Although the minimum number of bells rung for weddings was stated as 5 out of 6 or 6 out of 8, two cases referred to 3 out of 5 and 6 respectively and one referred to use of Ellacombe chimes rather than no bells. Several stated that if numbers fell below the quoted ranges they either wouldn't ring or would consider refunds, though so far, this had not happened

Many commented that the annual number of weddings dropped a couple of years ago but recently has increased again. Two towers reported over 30 weddings this year, and some said that the volume can make a difference as to how they are handled financially and ringers sought.

In summary, the average tower rings for about 30 minutes before the wedding, and for 20 or 30 minutes after, charges £10 per rope, makes a donation to either the church or the tower fund, rings a minimum of 5 bells, cooperates with other local ringers to ensure adequate representation on the day, and where necessary accommodates late brides by adjusting the duration of ringing after the wedding.

CHURCHES CONSERVATION TRUST

Churches marked the Churches Conservation Trust's 40th anniversary ringing their bells simultaneously at 2pm on Saturday 21 February. The Trust, a national charity that cares for 340 of the country's finest historic churches no longer used as regular places of worship, has organised the celebrations. The Churches Conservation Trust Regional Manager for the South West Peter Lankester said: "Our churches are centuries old, each is unique and each has its own significance both historically and architecturally. "Many historic churches are in desperate need of repair and cannot take part in the bell ringing celebrations because their bells are broken or missing or the building's fabric is degraded. "If cared for correctly they can also provide contemporary spaces for everyone to enjoy while also preserving and celebrating these great buildings for future generations"

BELLRINGING THERAPY

The following appeared in one of Dr LeFanu's Second Opinion column:

Further to the recent comments on "inversion therapy" for back pain as featured in this column, a reader suggests the ancient art of campanology might be similarly beneficial. Here the rhythmic action of pulling on the bell rope not only stretches the spine, thus taking pressure off any trapped nerves, but strengthens the back muscles at the same time.

"I have suffered on and off with back pain for many years," she writes. "But since taking up tower bell ringing two years ago I have had no recurrence".

THE APPLIEDORE TIME AND TIDE BELL

On Wednesday 27 May, a huge bell on the sea wall at Appledore will ring out for the first time. The bell is a newly invented form which can sound different notes to create a melody. The rise of the water at high tide will move the clapper to strike the bell.

The creation of the 6 foot high bell is an Arts Council funded project by sculptor and musician Marcus Vergette. Its dedication on Wednesday 27 May marked the launch of the Appledore Visual Arts Festival.

Marcus Vergette invented the new bell form which, from one strike, sounds different notes one after the other, creating a melody, said 'the idea of the Time and Tide Bell is to create, celebrate, and reinforce connections, between different parts of the country, between the land and the sea, between ourselves and our environment. One of this bell's many potential meanings is as a timepiece or time marker. Both in the way the bell is rung by the movement of the sea at high tide daily, but also as a long time marker of sea levels and where the shoreline is now'.

CHURCH CLOCKS (Shire Library) (Paperback 64 pages) by Hugh Rock

Since the medieval period, mechanical clocks located in churches across Britain have told the time to local communities, or displayed the phases of the moon and the heavens on an elaborate astrological face.

Focusing on some of the most noteworthy church clocks in Britain, and the intriguing stories behind them, this book traces the history of church clocks from the wealthy abbeys and cathedrals of the medieval period, through the gentle developments and refinements that made clocks more accurate and easier to maintain, to the electronic movements of the present day that are steadily making redundant historic clocks that have served for centuries.

OTTERY HAND-BELL RINGERS WIN LOTTERY AWARD

A £7,000 Lottery grant has been awarded to a group of Ottery hand-bell ringers. The Talatones who are funded by donations will invest in a brand-new set of 25 bells, and will own their instruments for the first time in their 25-year history. The ringers' current set of bells are on loan from churches in Talaton and Ottery. The National Lottery's *Awards For All* fund, which awarded the £7,000, had previously turned down a Talatones application. Group secretary Joan Dalton said: "The money will enable us to replace the borrowed hand-bells, which are very old and need refurbishing, with a completely new set with carrying cases. Having new bells will give us the opportunity to encourage more people from all walks of life, young and old to become members. We will no longer be restricted in what music we can buy and play. We don't charge for our performances and are reliant on charity. Without this, to get £7,000 from mostly senior citizens would have been impossible." Anybody interested in joining the group can contact Joan on (01404) 815082.

Ringkly Ringers' Five Day Holiday

A group of Devon Change Ringers have an annual bell ringing holiday by coach and in 2009 they will be altering their June holiday to go to the Windsor area on the 20 July and returning on 24 July. Ringing will take place every day, including on the journey up and back and during the stay in Crowthorne. If you are interested, deposits are now being taken by John Staddon, 96 Rivermead Road, Exeter EX2 4RL.

Dark stairs – a Health and Safety issue?

Does your tower have dark stairs to the ringing chamber, to the clock room or to the top of the tower? We often hear of Health and Safety and if your staircase is dark there are some ingenious ways to provide light. I have seen photographs of a church staircase where there is a ropelight along the steps. Although not a bright light, it is sufficient for people to see the stairs as the ropelight is so near to them and goes along the entire length. I guess the next thing to mention is the provision of emergency lighting. If you do not have this wired in there are lights you can wear as a headband and this may be a suitable short term alternative. This will allow the person to have the use of both hands as the light is attached to the headband. I have seen these hand free headband lights available in Outdoor Leisure shops. You may wish to consider having these inside the staircase, or in the ringing room, or anywhere else people might go where there is a possibility they could be plunged into darkness. If you are interested in reading about Health and Safety in towers try www.cccbr.org.uk where there are some articles shown on the recently revamped Central Council of Church Bellringers' Website.

Berry Pomeroy

The eight bells are now ringing at Berry Pomeroy. As a thank you to the many ringers who gave donations, an Open Day was held on 16 May. Having been privileged to ring there recently I can state that the bells are a delight to ring. There is a local band who intend to practise on a Thursday night. Please telephone beforehand.

Sampford Spiney

After raising £60,000 there are now six bells at Sampford Spiney and they are rung for services on the first Sunday in each month from 2.30 to 3.00 pm, and for practice on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays from 7.30 to 8.30 pm. The bells are to be dedicated by the Dean of Windsor, patron to the living, on Sunday 24th May 2009.

Retention of Ringers – Recent Developments in Coaching

This document is available on the CCCBR website. It states that bell ringing is not the only activity suffering from problems of recruitment and retention; other groups are reappraising the way they have been doing things. New principles are being introduced by coaches into a wide range of activities to help spur interest and ambition amongst participants. 10 years ago British cycling was in severe decline, members were leaving the British Cycling Federation in droves. This 13 page document by Pip Penney adapts the coaching techniques used by the performance director of the British Cycling team Dave Brailsford. At the Beijing Olympic Games the results of this new approach were fully realized with our cyclists winning 14 medals including 8 gold.

The article gives 10 Tips for Successful Coaching

1. Set your learners' needs first (not your own). People want to participate, have fun and demonstrate their skills.
2. Build good accurate foundations skills (style, bell control, listening skills, striking skills and understanding of ringing theory).
3. Hold up the idea that it is enjoyable. Practice time should be fun.
4. Remember, learners who do not derive enjoyment as well as improvement from practices are unlikely to return for many more.
5. Have infinite patience, especially with the slower learner.
6. Discuss with your learner their ambitions and targets. Short term, more easily attainable goals set with your learner will help prevent him from becoming disheartened. When goals are achieved set new ones.
7. Never criticise. Give honest realistic feedback in a positive and helpful manner.
8. Do not show favouritism to any learner.
9. Advise learners not to fear mistakes. Mistakes are not failures they are an essential part of the learning process.
10. Add an extra dimension to maintain enthusiasm such as outings, courses, lectures, social events and even going down the pub.

Pip Penney has also written a book "Teaching Unravalled: an evidence-based approach to teaching bell handling." £3 inc p&p. See <http://www.cccbr.org.uk/pubs/pricelist/> or on the home page, click other resources, further resources and scroll to Education and publication, look for ringing books, then publication list (CCCBR).

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HALLOWING OF THE BELLS ON ST MARY'S, ISLES OF SCILLY

Parishioners on the Isles of Scilly will soon be called to worship by the traditional sound synonymous with rural England – a peal of church bells. Islanders will soon be able to take up the ancient art of bell-ringing after a keen practitioner helped raise £129,000 to have the instruments manufactured and installed. The project is being undertaken by Nicholson Engineering of Bridport, Dorset.

John Maybrey, 73, learned the skill, when he was 13. When he visited his son and daughter-in-law on the islands, he realised the parish church at St Mary's only had a single bell. He said: "It's a very particular sound of the English countryside. Five thousand churches have got peals of bells in them, so why shouldn't the Isles of Scilly have one too?" With the consent of the vicar, he came up with the idea of offering bells as a memorial, in return for a percentage of the total cost. Seven of the eight bells were snapped up, each dedicated to the name of a donor's loved one for 300 years. The eighth bell was bought through funds raised collectively by the community. The 6th was donated by Brian and Anne Horrell who honeymooned on the Scillies in 1959 and who celebrate their Golden Wedding Anniversary on June 6th this year. Brian and Anne live in Budleigh Salterton and Brian is a member of the Withycombe Raleigh, Exmouth band.

The pleasant sounds of the Sunday morning call to worship moved a step closer when five tonnes of bells and the special frame to hold them was loaded on to the Isles of Scilly Steamship Company's supply vessel the Gry Maritha to be transported to St Mary's free of charge. Upon arrival the supporters decorated them at a special party. The bells will be rung for the first time when the peal is dedicated by Truro Bishop Tim Thornton on Ascension day, May 21.

Mr Maybrey, who lives in Hampshire, said he was looking forward to practising bell-ringing with his grandchildren and other islanders.

NATIONAL CHALLENGE

The Chairman of Devon Association has stated that he hopes to hold a double competition which will involve a 6 bell and 8 bell competition in two different towers in close proximity to each other. The provision date will be 19th September 2009 and entries will be restricted to 14 teams being 7 from Devon and 7 from outside the county.

ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT

At the AGM in November the new President was John Conibear. The President Elect is John Kelly, BEM who will serve as President from November 2009.

ASSOCIATION COMPETITIONS FOR 2009

Minor Final	West Down	23 May
Major Final	Lustleigh	13 June

Whitechapel has Royal Visit

One of the oldest manufacturing companies in the country had a visit from the Queen - 90 years after it laid out the red carpet for her grandfather. Not many people expected the Queen to suddenly turn up in London's East End when the Royal Bentley pulled up outside Whitechapel Bell Foundry.

Just a handful were outside as the Queen and Prince Philip arrived. After they were spotted stepping out of the car the news quickly spread and within minutes hundreds gathered. The Queen was on a whistle stop tour of the borough's factories to support British industries. The company founded in 1570 cast the original Liberty Bell in Philadelphia, the Great Bell of Montreal and Big Ben bell at Westminster. Staff at The Bell Foundry in Whitechapel Road gave the Queen and Prince Philip a tour of the famous company on March 25.

They were greeted by Alan Hughes and his wife Kathryn, directors of the Whitechapel Foundry. Kathryn, said: "The Queen was very interested to meet the workers and spent time talking to everyone. They had a tour of the premises and seemed genuinely interested in what we do. It was just like any other tours we do," Kathryn said, "But we normally stop the manufacturing process. We didn't this time." Workers at the foundry demonstrated bell tuning and making leather handles for hand bells. The last royal trip to The Bell Foundry was 90 years ago when King George V and Queen Mary visited. The Queen was presented with a small bell and Prince Philip given paper weights by the couple's daughters Jenifer and Lizzie.

Hundreds of people gathered outside the building to see the Royal Visitors off.

Interchange is published as part of both Guild and Association newsletters. Any opinions expressed in Interchange do not necessarily represent those of the Guild, the Association or the Devon Ringers' Council.

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