



Bristol Rural News

Gloucester and Bristol Diocesan Association of Church Bellringers

The Newsletter of Bristol Rural Branch Bellringers

No 280

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Headlines

1 All Branch ringing events cancelled until further notice

June-July
2021

Editor's Note

It is encouraging to hear that some of our Branch towers are beginning to ring again after more than a year. There are still significant constraints on what is permitted (see the latest guidance below) but at least that is a start. Over the next few weeks, especially after the June 'milestone', I hope that more of our ringers will feel confident enough to get back into the tower. The constraints restrict numbers and working in close proximity to other people, so it may yet be a while before we can resume Branch activities and start to tackle the important task of recruiting and teaching new ringers.

Chris Greef

From The Ringing World 14th May—Guidance on Ringing

The UK Government has confirmed that the next stage in the easing of Covid restrictions for England will start on 17th May. Up to six people or two households will be legally allowed to gather indoors, and most businesses, including indoor hospitality, will reopen. The Central Council's draft guidance on ringing during this period was summarised in the 23rd and 30th April issues, and is confirmed with this latest news from the government. The Council emphasises that the guidance is possible due to low levels of circulating virus, the effectiveness and take-up of vaccines, and the availability of lateral flow tests. Together, these factors mean that people who are at risk of serious disease are currently unlikely to come into contact with an infectious individual in a bell tower if the guidelines are followed. It is hoped that this is a transitional step towards even more permissible guidance for the period from 21st June. The following is abridged from the Council's online announcement as of 3rd May.

Guidelines for the 17th May - 21st June

o Rule of Six applies indoors - only six people from different families can meet at one time. However, if only two families are meeting together, the total may exceed six persons. In practice, this means that ringing sessions should be pre-arranged for six people rather than drop-in.

o Hands - Space - Face rules apply - face coverings, hand sanitising between ringing, 1m plus mitigations when

ringing and 2m social distancing in the tower at all non-ringing times.

o Lateral Flow Tests - a test performed during the previous 48 hours may be helpful. Data from Oxford University and Public Health England show that over 75% of individuals with COVID-19 test positive with these tests and over 95% of individuals with high viral loads. *o Consider your own personal risk* - recheck before every session "is it safe for me to ring? " Ask yourself the following questions before each ringing session:

- Do I (or anyone in my household) have a temperature or fever?

- Have I (or anyone in my household) lost the sense of taste and/or smell?

- Do I (or anyone in my household) have a new continuous cough?

- Have I (or anyone in my household) been in contact with anyone that is confirmed COVID-19 positive in the last seven days?

- Have I had a positive lateral flow test in the past seven days?

If the response to any of the above is yes, then you should not ring until the possibility of COVID-19 infection has been excluded and any quarantine period has been completed.

o Restrict ringing time to 15 minutes whilst maintaining good tower ventilation during these weeks, longer periods of ringing should be restricted to planned episodes undertaken by low risk individuals. Restricting the time of ringing during this period is not a statutory requirement, but a recommendation for this transition period based on an average well-ventilated ringing chamber.

The Whitechapel Bell Foundry

The Housing Secretary has approved a controversial application to revamp the Grade II-listed Whitechapel Bell Foundry in Tower Hamlets, East London. The decision was met with outrage from heritage campaigners who accused the Government of selling off a piece of British history for the sake of "another charmless boutique hotel".

The foundry has helped produce some of the world's most famous chimes including re-casting the original bell

at Big Ben the year before its first bong sounded across the capital in 1859. The bellmakers have supplied Canterbury and Guildford Cathedrals and were the original manufacturers of the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia, known as a symbol of American Independence.

In 2017 the Hughes family, who had run Britain's oldest single-purpose industrial building for four generations, decided to sell its home since 1739 amid fears the production of church bells was no longer viable. It was bought by Essex-based property developer Vincent Goldstein, who in turn sold it to the American investment group Raycliffe Capital. In November 2019, planning permission was voted through at a public meeting of Tower Hamlets council's development committee, despite huge opposition from local residents and heritage experts.

A petition containing 28,000 signatures and 900 objections were lodged to the hotel planning application. Following an announcement this week that conversion of the site will proceed, former Tate curator Andrew Wilson wrote on Twitter that it was "another example of the normalisation of money-grabbing philistinism that this government promotes". He added: "I hate and am so depressed by the world we are becoming, where a bell foundry becomes another charmless boutique hotel." Charles Saumarez-Smith, former chief executive of the Royal Academy of Arts in London, said the decision by Jenrick was "play-acting, a superficial veneer over rather brutal capitalists, who are happy to use British history for their own purposes." Writing on his blog, he added: "A hotel for foreign tourists is more important than a bit of living history. You can feel the mood in the City, where so little is left of the historic City..."

Designs submitted by London-based 31/44 Architects reveal that the 103-room boutique hotel will feature a cafe, studios for creative businesses and a rooftop pool. The hotel, which will be built around the bell-making facility, will also include a modern foundry that will produce some small bells under licence. Raycliffe plans to preserve the building at the front of the site but will demolish a 1980's extension at the rear.

Campaigners, Re-Form Heritage group and Factum Foundation had instead hoped to preserve the heritage of the site by forming a charitable trust and turning it into a working foundry once again. But the Government report said that there is "no material basis on which it could reasonably be concluded that Re-Form's 'idea' represents a viable proposition. Interesting perhaps, and entertaining perhaps, but simply not viable." In its conclusion it adds that the Raycliffe plans "follow a conservation-led approach which seeks to secure the future of the building in a manner that best maintains its historic significance" and that the hotel will be "the highest quality of design".

A spokesperson for Historic England said: "We believe that the proposals have the makings of a successful heritage regeneration scheme, and would provide a

sustainable future for this important group of listed buildings."

Clare Wood, the chief executive of Re-Form Heritage, said the decision "will see irreversible damage to an internationally renowned Grade II* listed site." She continued: "Nonetheless, without our collective efforts, the site and its traditions stretching back over 400 years would have been lost without a whimper. An important national debate has taken place. We can only hope that the inquiry is a wakeup call to prevent such losses in the future".

From The Daily Telegraph

Ringling Books Available

Tony York has some books and badges available at cost as below. Please contact him if you are interested:

The One per Learner Book (the little yellow book, ideal for learners for logging progress in early stages) - £1 each.

Ringling Circles (gives the blue line and details of what happens at calls for some standard methods) - some left at £3.50 each—new price £4.

Tony York

Branch Ringling Achievements

Bells were tolled at a number of Branch towers, firstly for the Day of Reflection on Covid, and then following the death of Prince Philip.

A Day of Reflection

Almondsbury—Gerry Anniss

Bitton—Sue Elliott

Sue says:

Following the one minute silence on the anniversary of the first lockdown on 23rd March 2021, the tenor bell was rang 126 times at St Mary's in remembrance of the 126,000 who have sadly lost their lives to Covid 19. It is only as you stand there listening to the poignant tolling do you reflect on the scale of grief and loss so far in this pandemic.

HRH Prince Philip

Coalpit Heath—Alison Holliday

Frampton Cotterell—Lucy Bailey: Gary Crisp

Iron Acton—Carol Groom

Pucklechurch—Angela Robb

Thornbury—Chris White-Horn

Winterbourne—Chris Greef

Comment from the church organist:

Just a quick message to say thank you for tolling the St Michael's bell yesterday. I stopped playing and stood outside to use the time for some reflection, and it was a really poignant few minutes. As I stood, several cars slowed or even stopped as they went past the church while you were ringing, so I wasn't alone in appreciating the gesture.