

So, you've agreed to take part in Heritage Open Days ? Hints on Running a successful Tower Open Day



1. Introduction

You may have decided in a rash moment to open your tower to the public, perhaps as part of the **Challenge 500 Heritage Open Day** project. If you have and you're now wondering how best to go to about it, this article is for you. It brings together practical tips which have worked at many successful open days, **but please don't feel you have to do everything** – just pick out the ideas that are useful to you.



2. Know Your Aims

As with any event, the more you put in the more you will get out ! You'll probably have one of both of two aims :-

- to raise awareness of bell ringing, and/or
- to gain new recruits.

If you're *just* looking to raise awareness of bell ringing, your objectives will be more limited, but if you're looking to gain new recruits, running a hands-on 'taster session' will work very well. Whatever the aim, make sure everyone helping knows beforehand what you are trying to achieve.



3. Advertising and Publicity

You'll need to think about advertising. Here are some ideas:

An article for the parish magazine, church notices, or local paper :-

- Feature the appealing things: 'have a go on the bells', visit the belfry, see how ringing is done, tea and cake
- Include a contact number or email. Someone may say they cannot come on that day but would love to come another time.

- If you don't have the time or resources to produce your own, the Central Council have a useful template which you can find at :-
<http://www.ringingtargets.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/open-day.pdf>

Posters

- Put your posters in church, outside church (laminated or in plastic folder), local library, doctor's surgery, bus stop shelter, local newsagent

An A5 flyer

- Put through doors of local neighbours. Leave a pile at the back of the church.

Your congregation

- Get the incumbent to talk about your event when giving notices during a service.
- Encourage the congregation to suggest anyone who would be interested in coming along (eg grandchildren)

An Outside PVC Banner

- You could consider getting a "Try your hand at bell ringing" banner made. They can be ordered online from various sources for around £40.

Enrolment and Ticketing

- If you're concerned that you'll be inundated with people you could consider asking visitors to book in advance. At its simplest, you could set-up a 'one-off' email address and ask people to email to book a slot.
- However, this also can dissuade people, particularly if they are looking for somewhere to go on the day itself.
- You would be surprised how many people you can in fact accommodate – 80 or so is perfectly possible. The trick is to monitor groups going up to the belfry and have a range of things to interest them downstairs (see *Other Things To See And Do* below).



4. Essential Preparation

Event Risk Assessment

- To ensure your insurance cover is maintained (see *Permissions and Insurance* below) you will need to conduct and record a risk assessment in advance of the event. At first sight this seems a daunting task, but at its simplest it's just a list of the potential risks your visitors may face and what action has been taken to mitigate them.
- There's no standard format for a risk assessment. It's up to your judgement how much you include, but you can find examples :-
 - on the Tower Stewardship section of the Central Council's website

- on the HSE's website at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/assessment.htm>
 - on the Heritage Open Days website
- There are also useful summaries on the Central Council's website, the Heritage Open Days website and from Ecclesiastical Insurance at <http://www.ecclesiastical.com/churchmatters/images/bell-ringing-guidance.pdf>

Fire Assessment

- Establish how many visitors the tower can accommodate at any one time and stick to it.

Safety Notices

- Fix a laminated notice at the base of the tower advising on the number of steps to the ringing chamber and belfry (if your visitors are going there), plus any access issues (for example uneven steps)
- Fix laminated notices ahead of any specific trip or collision hazards.

Maximum Group Size and Minimum Age

- Work out your maximum group size ahead of the event and stick to it.
- Work out the minimum age at which you can safely allow children to visit the belfry and/or take part in a practical session.
- Make clear in your publicity what these limits are.

First Aid Kits and Emergencies

- Check the tower first aid kit and have an emergency torch to hand..
- Make sure you have a notice with the tower's address and postcode prominently displayed in case of emergency.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

- The Central Council have produced a useful paper on DBS requirements, which can be found at <http://www.cccbr.org.uk/towerstewardship/notes/GN3v9.pdf>.
- In summary, it is **not** necessary to obtain DBS clearance in order to run a one-off training or taster session, or to accept visitors to a tower, whether they are children or adults.

Permissions and Insurance

- Ensure you have written permission from your church and that the church insurance policy covers your event.
- The vicar (through the churchwardens) has ultimate responsibility for the safety of the public and should know the details of the church's insurance policies.

- In the case of Heritage Open Days, separate insurance has been arranged for the event, although there are exceptions. Details of the cover can be found at https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/uploads/_document-library/NT_HOD_Insurance_summary_2016.pdf.

Don't allow yourself to be suffocated by rules, but do demonstrate an awareness of public safety and show you have made an effort to mitigate any potential risks. This is essential to ensure that your church's insurance cover is maintained.



5. The Welcome

Reception

- A '**meet and greet**' area, ideally outside the church is a good idea.
- Your Guild or Association may have publicity stands which you can borrow for the day.
- A gazebo makes a good focal point for people to head for, especially with some chairs and a few bell ropes hung from the sides!
- Have **local ringers on hand to welcome people**.
- Have someone in charge of **refreshments**.

Registration

- Have a clip board to write down everyone's name, phone number and email address. IF YOU ARE RECRUITING THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF THE DAY.
- If you haven't enrolled people in advance and there's a lot of interest, you might need to give out tickets indicating which session a visitor has been allocated to.

Safety Talk

- Each visit should start with a brief explanation of safety precautions, fire alarms (if you have them) and the evacuation procedure.
- You will want your visitors to take responsibility for their own safety (no scarves or loose clothing, no feet over the edge of boxes, no crossed legs etc.), especially if you are giving them a practical session.
- You could consider giving each visitor a handout with this information as they'll be more likely to read and think about it while they're waiting.



6. The Visit

Explanation of English change ringing

- A good thing to do while people are waiting to access the tower.
- Explain the difference between chiming (as in Europe) and full circle ringing.
- Demonstrating using a model will be very useful.

In the Ringing Chamber

- Take small groups (depending on the space you have) to the ringing chamber.
- Start with a basic health and safety instruction reminder - don't touch ropes or move around, keep feet on the floor etc.
- Give a brief introduction (number of bells, biggest and smallest, weights etc).
- Have a ringer demonstrate a few strokes. If you have cctv or a webcam in the belfry get them to watch the bell turning over as it's rung.

In the Belfry

If you choose to include a Belfry tour :-

- Take small groups up to see the bells if safe to do so.
- Ear defenders are a good idea.
- Give a brief explanation of parts of the bell and how they work.
- Liaise with person in charge in ringing chamber (shout down or use a mobile phone) and arrange for one bell to be turned over 2 or 3 times.

Ringling Demonstrations

- Use your local band to give a demonstration of ringing changes or a short method so visitors get the full picture of what we have been talking about.

Taster Session

If you choose to include a 'taster session' :-

- Have a competent trainer on hand.
- There are two options to consider, depending on the calibre of your visitors :-
 - Backstrokes only –
 - Start with the bell up and demonstrate backstrokes only, using an experienced ringer as the 'dummy learner' and getting your visitors to 'shadow' your ringer.
 - Then have your trainer give visitors a few closely supervised backstrokes until they feel comfortable.
 - Chiming only :-
 - For the ringing demonstration (see above) arrange to ring the bells up before and down afterwards.
 - Give each of your visitors the opportunity to chime the tenor.



7. Other Things to See and Do

You may need something to occupy people while they are waiting :-

Ringling 'Stuff'

- A table with ringing paraphernalia: copies of 'Dove', 'Diagrams', books on ringing, copy of The Ringing World and diary, example of a simple method, pictures of bells 'up' and 'down' etc.

Handbells

- On a separate table (with a cloth) and a ringer in charge to supervise people wanting to ring a bell. Perhaps you could organise 6 people to ring rounds, followed by Queens.

Belfry Quiz for Children

- A "Belfry Quiz" or Bell ringing Word search. Create your own word search online at <http://puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com/WordSearchSetupForm.asp> or make up your own quiz. Keep it fairly simple. How many bells are there? What's the fluffy bit called? Write the name of a method. What's the proper name for bell ringing?
- With a quiz, make sure you have already given the answers in your introductory talk. Anyone who completes the word search or quiz gets a treat (even the kids !).



8. Before They Go

Handout

- Make sure that someone is armed with **blue ringing leaflets** to give out to each person, with a sticker with your contact details on the back. Get leaflets from the CC website or email leaflets@cccbr.org.uk . They cost 3p each plus postage. 200 will cost you £11.70.

The 'hard sell'

- And finally, but very importantly, have enough enthusiastic local ringers around to chat to visitors, telling them why they enjoy their hobby, what a great social element there is, and how welcome they would be if they wish to give it a go.

9. After the Event



Follow-up Session

- No more than 48 hours after the event, contact everyone who came with the offer of a follow-up session for anyone wanting to learn to ring, on..... (make this soon, and within a few weeks at most).
- And if you don't get any takers you will still have 'sown a seed' which may bear fruit later.
- You'll also have done much to raise the profile of bell ringing!

Margaret Bale, August, 2016

(for Central Council of Church Bell Ringers Public Relations Committee)