

Commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of the end of World War II 10th July 2005

Bells to ring out across the country at 5pm

10th July is to be the day of commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the ending of World War II. The Ministry of Defence have requested that bells should ring out across the country at 5pm. The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers <http://www.cccb.org.uk> has encouraged bellringers throughout the country to respond, and for ringers to endeavour to make sure that the general public will understand the significance of this particular ringing through parish magazines, newsletters and the local media.

There are about 6000 peals of bells in the UK hung for full-circle ringing. The bells are fitted with ropes and full wheels so that the bell can swing 360 degrees, first one way and then the other, to achieve absolute precision about when the bell will 'strike'. One person operates each bell, and there are usually from 5 up to 12 bells in a tower. The bells 'ring the changes' – where each bell sounds once only in each sequence and moves only one place in the next. It has been described as being rather like 'musical chess'. There are very active centres of change ringing in London, Bristol, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, and York, as well as university ringing societies throughout the country, but especially at Cambridge, Oxford, Durham, Bristol, Birmingham and London. Change ringing is an intellectually challenging pursuit, which demands commitment to team achievement. Co-ordination and technique are more important than physical strength. However, bells ring out not just from cathedrals and large cities, but also from small village churches. The sound of bells across the fields has inspired poets such as John Clare, John Betjeman and Alfred, Lord Tennyson. Change ringing was also the inspiration for Dorothy L Sayers and her fen based murder mystery *The Nine Tailors*.

It is particularly significant that bells should be used in celebration of the World War II anniversary because during the War, the government needed to find some means of alerting the whole country to the immediate danger of enemy landings. They chose the one signal which would reach virtually everybody in the country – church bells; and on June 13 1940 an Order in Council announced that bells were

not to be rung except on the orders of the police or the military. If they were rung, it would be as a warning of invasion.

From then until 1943 towers were left unused except where their roofs were lookout points for the local Home Guard. It was not until after the Battle of El Alamein at the end of October 1942 when the likelihood of invasion had almost vanished that bells were heard again. On VE Day 1945 bells rang out in celebration of victory, and on 10th July 2005 they will be rung as a celebration of peace. Locally the bells will be rung at.....

Local contact for further information is:and enquiries about arranging to see bells being rung and learning to ring them would be welcomed.

Central Council of Church Bell Ringers
prchairman@cccbr.org.uk