



Physical Environment for Ringing

Assisting Towers in Decision Making

During the Coronavirus pandemic, the characteristics of the Ringing Chamber strongly affect whether it is appropriate or not to resume ringing.

Why is this important? A very significant proportion of infections are caught through droplets and aerosols spread in the air: people are more likely to catch Coronavirus if they are closer to one another and if the air around them is not being changed. Most of us will have the experience of having caught a cold from someone who came to ringing practice whilst unwell. This is an example of how respiratory viruses can be transmitted through the air, and because of the far greater potential danger of coronavirus, we must do all we can to ensure it doesn't happen.

Ventilation

Scientific evidence suggests that excellent ventilation will be beneficial in reducing the risk of transmission of Coronavirus, and this has underlain why the Government first permitted families to meet out of doors when beginning to relax the lockdown.

This is an area where there is much more variation between ringing chambers, and there is very little objective evidence to help with decision making. At the good extreme would be a ground floor ring, where the external doors can be open to allow free flow of air. At the other extreme would be a small ringing chamber with no openable windows and a low ceiling.

In deciding whether ventilation is sufficient, Tower Captains, Churchwardens and Incumbents will want to ensure their ringing chamber is suitably spacious, and that the air is capable of changing regularly (not just circulating), by opening windows and leaving the stair door open, so as to cause draughts. If this is not possible, then it is unlikely that ringing is appropriate in that tower.

Size of Ringing Chamber

While we are still ringing with 2m separation, or 1.5m if three ropes fall in a straight line, the size of the ringing chamber is essentially going to dictate how many bells can be rung.

Access and Physical Surfaces

There is some evidence for the transmission of Coronavirus by people touching surfaces that have been contaminated by virus. Although this comes from clinical environments, it is sensible to adjust behaviour so as to minimise the possible contamination and touching of surfaces by different people, especially as this has little detrimental effect on ringing. In practice this means:

- Use of hand sanitiser before and after ringing
- Thorough cleaning of surfaces that are touched by more than one person
- Only one person per bell rope
- Not touching handrails, etc. if safely possible
- Minimising clutter in the Ringing Chamber that can be a surface for droplets and aerosols to land on