



Guidance Note: Operation London Bridge

This guidance has been formulated in consultation with Buckingham Palace and Lambeth Palace.

There are official protocols in place in the event of the death of a member of the Royal Family. The two principal forms of these operations have been named 'London Bridge' (OLB), the death of Her Majesty the Queen and 'Forth Bridge' (the death of Prince Philip). 'London Bridge' is accompanied by a parallel set of plans named 'Spring Tide' (the movements and official engagements of the new Monarch) and these have been worked out for each day from when the Royal death is announced (Day 0) through to Day+10 when the state funeral will take place.

Bell ringing will play in integral part throughout the process and there is some concern about what the 'correct' procedure should be. Town and city councils will already have an OLB plan in place and this will consist of what to do on the day on the announcement and the following days, in accordance with Royal protocol.

As with most national/international bell ringing requests, local arrangements with church, council and public plans should be consulted and ringing should take place whenever is most appropriate for a local arrangement.

A lot will depend on the timing of announcements and where we are in the Church liturgical calendar.

The following sets out some guidelines that the bell ringing community might find helpful:

Muffles and ringing muffled bells:

Muffles are leather pads fitted to a bell's clapper to reduce the volume. They attenuate the bell's strike note whilst retaining the hum. By only muffling the clapper on one side you get an 'echo' effect as blows are alternately loud and soft.

Bells are usually muffled on the backstroke as the handstroke gap emphasises the echo effect. Two muffles can be fitted, one on each side of the clapper, to fully muffle the bell. Bells are only rung fully-muffled (with the backstroke of the tenor left open) for the death of the Sovereign, the incumbent Vicar (Parish Priest), or the Bishop of the dioceses.

For safety reasons, muffles should always be fitted and removed with the bells down. To muffle the backstroke, put the muffle on the side of the clapper that is furthest away from the pulley. To muffle the handstroke, put the muffle on the side of the clapper that is nearest to the pulley.

On the day of announcement of the death of Monarch:

Bells should be rung fully or half-muffled as soon as is practicable on the day of the announcement, having consulted with the church first. It is considered appropriate to ring fully muffled where possible, with the tenor backstroke open, if you have sufficient muffles.

Following days:

Bells should remain muffled until the day that the Palace proclaim the new Monarch. At that point bells should be rung open in celebration of the accession at a practicable time (again, with the agreement of the church) following the announcement.

Bells should then revert to being rung muffled until the day of the state funeral (10 days after the announcement of the death). On the day of the funeral bells should be tolled for the hour immediately prior to the time of the funeral Service. This may afford those an opportunity to ring a quarter peal, but general ringing or tolling would be acceptable.

There may be further clarification being offered by the Palace or the Church of England at the appropriate time, if this is the case the CCCBR will communicate this via the website and social media channels.

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