



Heritage Open Days Activities

Bringing Behind the Bells to Life

Heritage Open Days offer a unique opportunity to welcome visitors into your church tower and share the fascinating world of bellringing. While every tower is different, the most memorable events are those that encourage visitors to experience bellringing for themselves, ask questions, and meet the people who keep this remarkable tradition alive.

Whether your event lasts a couple of hours or a full weekend, consider offering a mixture of demonstrations, guided experiences, and hands-on activities to engage visitors of all ages.

Meet the Bellringers

Introduce visitors to the people behind the ropes.

Encourage ringers to share:

- How they first started ringing.
- What they enjoy most about the hobby.
- Favourite ringing experiences.
- Why they volunteer.
- What keeps them coming back.

Personal stories are often what visitors remember most.

Guided Tower Tours

Take visitors behind the scenes and explain:

- The history of the church.
- The bell chamber and how the bells are hung.
- The ringing chamber.
- How the ropes work.
- Tower architecture.
- Spectacular views from the tower (where appropriate).

Remember to adapt tours to suit your tower's accessibility and safety requirements.

Live Bellringing Demonstrations

Nothing captures attention quite like hearing bells being rung.

Consider demonstrating:

- How one bell works.
- A short piece of rounds.
- Simple changes.
- A full method (with explanation).
- How the team works together.

Explain what visitors are hearing in simple language.

Have-a-Go Sessions

If suitable and supervised, invite visitors to:

- Hold a bell rope.
- Learn about handling.
- Watch a demonstration up close.
- Ask questions throughout.

For many visitors, touching a bell rope for the first time is the highlight of their visit.

Bell History Display

Create a small exhibition featuring:

- Historic photographs.
- Old peals and quarter peals.
- Newspaper cuttings.
- Bell restoration projects.
- Tower records.
- Old ringing books.
- Bell inscriptions.
- Interesting artefacts.

How Bells Work

Explain the engineering behind bellringing.

Visitors often enjoy learning about:

- Wheels.
- Headstocks.
- Clappers.
- Bearings.
- Bell frames.
- Ropes.
- Sallies.
- Tail ends.

Simple diagrams or labelled photographs can help explain these features.

Share Your Tower's Story

Every tower has a unique history.

Tell visitors about:

- The oldest bell.
- Significant restorations.
- Famous occasions.
- Memorable peals.
- Wartime history.
- Local traditions.
- Long-serving ringers.
- Multi-generational ringing families.

Stories create lasting memories.

Family Activities

Help younger visitors get involved with activities such as:

- Bell-themed colouring sheets.
- Tower treasure hunts.
- Spot-the-bell challenges.

- Bell quizzes.
- Heritage trails around the church.
- Simple "How bells work" worksheets.

Family-friendly activities encourage longer visits and inspire curiosity.

Photo Opportunities

Encourage visitors to capture their experience.

Ideas include:

- Ringers in action.
- Bell ropes.
- Historic bells.
- Tower staircases.
- Views from the tower.
- Group photographs.
- Heritage Open Days displays.

Invite visitors to share their photos on social media using the Heritage Open Days and local event hashtags.

Refreshments and Conversation

Never underestimate the value of a warm welcome.

Tea, coffee, squash, homemade cakes, or biscuits provide the perfect opportunity for visitors to relax, ask questions, and chat with bellringers in an informal setting.

Many future ringers begin with a conversation over a cup of tea!

Learn to Ring Information

Make it easy for interested visitors to take the next step.

Provide:

- Learn to Ring leaflets.
- Contact details.
- Practice night information.
- QR codes linking to your website or social media.

A simple invitation could inspire someone to become your next bellringer.

Make Every Visitor Feel Welcome

You don't need a large budget or a packed programme to create a successful Heritage Open Days event. A friendly welcome, enthusiastic volunteers, and the chance to discover what happens **Behind the Bells** are often all it takes to leave a lasting impression.

Every visitor is an opportunity to share the story of your tower, celebrate our living heritage, and inspire the next generation of bellringers.