



## **Intangible Cultural Heritage**

### **Celebrating a Living Tradition**

When people think of heritage, they often think of historic buildings, ancient monuments or treasured objects. While these are an important part of our shared history, heritage is also about the traditions, skills and knowledge that are passed from one generation to the next.

This is known as **Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)**.

Intangible Cultural Heritage recognises the customs, practices and skills that communities value and continue to keep alive. These traditions are not preserved in museums—they are lived, shared and passed on by people. They evolve over time, bringing communities together while maintaining a connection with the past.

Church bellringing is a wonderful example of living heritage.

For generations, ringers have passed on the skills of change ringing through patient teaching, regular practice and shared experience. Every learner benefits from the encouragement and knowledge of those who came before them, ensuring that this unique tradition continues to flourish. From weekly practices and Sunday services to weddings, national celebrations and moments of remembrance, bellringing remains an active and valued part of community life.

What makes bellringing special is that it is more than the bells themselves. While our bells and towers are often historic, it is the people, the skills and the sense of community that truly keep the tradition alive. Every volunteer who teaches a new learner, every band that rings for a local celebration, and every tower that opens its doors to welcome visitors is helping to safeguard this living heritage for future generations.

Heritage Open Days provide the perfect opportunity to share this story. Visitors are often fascinated to discover that bellringing is still practised every week by volunteers of all ages and backgrounds. By introducing people to the ringing chamber, demonstrating how bells are rung, and sharing the stories of your tower and its ringers, you are helping others appreciate not only your church's history but also the vibrant tradition that continues today.

### **Talking about Intangible Cultural Heritage**

When speaking with visitors or the media, simple language is often the most effective. You might describe bellringing as:

- **A living tradition that has been passed from generation to generation.**
- **A unique skill kept alive by dedicated volunteers.**
- **An important part of our church and community life.**
- **A tradition that continues to evolve while respecting its history.**
- **A wonderful example of living heritage in action.**

Heritage is not only found in the stones of our churches or the bells in our towers, it is found in the people who continue to learn, teach and share these remarkable traditions. Every Heritage Open Days event helps celebrate that living heritage and inspires others to become part of its future.