

The recent email from our ODG officers has indicated that work is in progress with the CCCBR having discussions with PHE about further steps which may lead to some relaxation of the current restrictions that apply to ringing so perhaps a tiny glimmer at the end of the tunnel. In the meantime here are some updates on what is happening in the Chipping Norton Branch.

Burford

Unfortunately we are not in a position to make progress.

I measured the distances between ropes in the ringing rooms, and at the 6 bell towers none of them have 3 bells which are safely distanced. So that rules out Taynton, Fulbrook, and Asthall – and also Windrush where we are asked to help out. I have suggested to churchwardens that they might ring the Sanctus bell at their towers if they are having any services, and they agree with that suggestion. At Burford we could ring 3 or perhaps 4 bells from a safe distancing point of view of the ropes, but there are other issues concerning safe access and egress. In addition, most of our ringers do not live in Burford and I do not believe that it would be right to expect ringers to spend time travelling (plus climbing 72 steps and ringing up and down) in order to ring for 15 minutes. Also, the churchwardens and clergy at Burford do not want us to ring: there are strict limits on numbers of the congregation, which would normally be much exceeded, so that they would not want any bells to be rung as that might attract extra people who would have to be turned away.

An important, even critical, additional factor for all our potential ringing is that:

Nine of our ringers are over seventy years of age, including seven over the age of eighty.

Some of these and/or spouses also have medical conditions, which make them even more vulnerable to Coronavirus.

I believe that we owe a duty of care to ringers and their families to avoid wherever possible any exposure to the virus, and it is far from clear how effective social distancing and other precautions are, particularly now that many lockdown restrictions are being relaxed, and schools reopening.

I believe that it would be premature to recommence bell ringing in the Benefice at this time.

The priority must surely be to keep safe.

Nigel Harrison

Charlbury

As everywhere else, we are unable to ring at the moment - the ropes are too close together. We could ring three only, but decided that would sound too mournful. As an alternative we have dusted off the handbells and now welcome the congregation to the morning service while standing in a socially distanced circle in the churchyard. We also practise on Wednesday evenings at 4:30, when the church closes, and volunteer to clean the church with sterilised wipes when finished. So far we have learned several 8 bell calls - apart from Queens and Tittums, we've tried Whittingtons, Burdette, Hagdyke, Princes and See-Saw. They all sound lovely on handbells and we have had many compliments. We've not attempted hunting yet, but if this goes on for longer who knows what we might do. Another advantage is that the learners can contribute without having to go through the tedious process of learning bell handling. When we do go back, we're not sure how we will manage big bells - all our ringing muscles seem to have shrunk!

We are lucky we can open at Charlbury that, having only chairs, we can distribute them 2m apart and services have been well attended – I think we can cater for around 60 seats which are well filled each week.

Mike Summers

Chipping Norton

After a lot of preparation, which involved checking the bells, cleaning the ringing chamber, completing the necessary paperwork, including individual ringers' assessments (!) we eventually had the approval of the PCC to proceed.

We rang 4 bells for fifteen minutes after a wedding on 15th August after ringing them up the previous afternoon with the Vicar's permission. This ringing also commemorated the 75th anniversary of VJ Day.

Then we rang 4 bells on Sunday 30th August for 15 minutes, prior to a special afternoon service.

Christine Harris

Hook Norton

Just to say how well our virtual tower ringing & pub sessions each week using ringing room & zoom respectively are going. Despite technical issues at times with the combination of phones, iPads, & laptops, we are progressing in our ringing as a mixed group & the camaraderie, friendship & support, plus the laughs, teasing & silliness thereafter are brilliant. It seems an excellent way to keep contacts & the team together, both in the village & our further afield friends, some as far as Staffordshire & Hull, as well as Oxfordshire villages. I do think of it as one of the highlights of the week & an excellent catch up session while we are limited otherwise in these difficult times.

Helen Burchell

Shipton-under-Wychwood

Four Shipton ringers on Saturday 1st August rang 4 bells (1, 3, 5 & 7) for 15 minutes after a wedding in the church.

Mike Brooks

Thank you to all of those who have made contributions to this newsletter.

If you do not receive the newsletter directly and wish to do so, please email me.

Thank you.

Chris

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