

LIMPSFIELD CHURCH BELLS – COME AND RING

DO WE WANT OUR CHURCH BELLS TO STILL BE RINGING IN 2030? IF WE DO WE NEED TO START TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT IN 2018, to build a team that is capable, not of just ringing a few changes on a Sunday morning, but with the expertise to lead and train the next generation(s).

Church bell ringing as you hear across the towns and villages of England is a very special **English** tradition, echoed in a just few churches in other parts of the British Isles and the Commonwealth. St. Peter's bells have rung since at least the 15th century when our No. 3 was cast in a sandpit in the churchyard. Most local people like the church bells, whether they are church members or not, but there is a widespread assumption that because they have always rung, they always will. Not necessarily so, and it's much harder to build a new band than bring new blood into an existing one.

If we had a larger pool of ringers we could operate a rota for Sunday mornings, like the servers, and reduce the pressure on the few. At present we have 10 ringers ranging in age from 14 to 76. We have only six bells, so only six people can ring at any one time. For most of our public ringing we try to stick to simple but well-struck changes.

1. SO WHAT SORT OF PEOPLE ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

- Basically ordinary people from all walks of life Physically reasonably well-coordinated. We are actually controlling the bells rather than seriously heaving them around. They are several times our own weight, but they are so cleverly balanced that you don't have to be desperately strong. Not too small, probably from about 12 years-old, and in later years not-too-frail. Everyone progresses at their own speed. Determination and patience are great assets.
- Teenagers: Teenagers are the quickest learners, and bell-ringing is a great option for the skill section of Duke of Edinburgh's Award. But you don't have to be doing D. of E. to ring.
- Adults Who Rang as Teenagers: We'd really like to have you. You'll be surprised how quickly it comes back. I know – I did it after a 25 year break. It's like riding a bicycle; it's a learned skill but once you can do it you don't forget.
- Young and Middle-Aged Adults: YOU ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE BAND OF 2030, because hopefully, you are the ones who will still be here. And it's a transferrable skill/hobby if you move house.
- Newly Retired People: Bell ringing is a very rewarding retirement project.
- Non-Church People: We want you too. If you like the sound of the bells and you'd like to have a go, come and see us. A lot of really good ringers across the country are not church-goers so don't be shy.

2. HOW DO I LEARN?

Firstly you learn to actually handle your bell. This usually takes place on a one-to-one basis, usually in 20-30 minute slots by private arrangement between an expert teacher and the student. Once you've mastered that you start to practise with the other ringers, and learn to ring rhythmically as part of a band. This takes from a few weeks to a few months by

which time most people are up to speed for basic Sunday ringing. If you get really hooked and want to progress to more intricate methods, that is easily arranged.

3. WHAT IS INVOLVED - FAQs?

- How Difficult Is it? Basic ringing is not that difficult although it's not an easy-peasy jingle-jangle that some people assume. Safety is always our first priority.
- What is the Time Commitment?
 - a) Initially short sessions by arrangement with the bell-handler.
 - b) Sundays we ring from 9.30-ish to 9.55 am. Not everyone rings every Sunday and if we have more ringers we can operate a proper rota.
 - c) Weekly Practice Night: Once you have learnt the basic technique we practise once a week on Tuesdays. Not everybody can manage every week. We understand this
 - d) Wedding ringing etc. is by arrangement with whoever is available on the day – and it's paid. We ring for Limpsfield School Services if we can raise a band mid-week. For national occasions like jubilees and other national celebrations we try to involve as many of our ringers as are available.
- Do I Have to Stay to Church after Sunday Ringing? Up to you!

To find out more, and arrange a taster session contact Lynda Boast (01883 715085), Marianne Bell (01883 712970) or any of the ringers.

Marianne Bell